Kenshin no Keishousha Volume 2

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These are novel illustrations that were included in **Volume 2**

剣神の継承者II

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剣神の継承者II
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日奈子はクロウの前で立ち止まり、
ふうふうと息を整える。

今日の日奈子が着ているのは、
チアガールの衣装だ。派手な黄色のノースリーブに、
太ももももあらわなミニスカート。
こういうものを着るときは見えてもいい下着をつけるのだが、
日奈子はそれを知っているだろうか。

「はあ、はあ、疲れました……。
走るのはダメですね……」

「……なんであんたも
入ってきてるんだ！
きゃっ……」
「姫君のお着替えを
お手伝いしてしんぜようかと思って」

クロウ
剣聖に育てられた
人間の少年。
リンネ
クロウが街中で出会った
天真爛漫な少女。
シルフィ
元老院議員を務める
セフィの姉。
さくらい・ひなこ
桜井日奈子
太陽教教祖の娘。
外の世界に興味津々。
セフィ
クロウの幼馴染み。
クロウの剣に惹かれている。

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Prologue

The pale blue sky stretched for miles, with not a single cloud to be seen.

It was already past mid-May, the sunlight being glaringly bright and warm winds blowing about.

“Looks like it’s going to be summer soon.”

A youth in a school uniform was looking up dreamily at the sky while he walked on.

The monotonous sky seemed to be the only one ignoring approaching summer’s presence, its appearance as normal as it always was.

Looking at the scenery in the sky, the youth— Kurou felt a sense of relief.

Recently, he had been observing weird phenomena in the sky. However, those phenomena would only last for the briefest of moments, and at this moment in time he hadn’t spotted anything out of the ordinary. Halcyon days were the best.

Kurou was currently in one corner of the academy he was attending as a student, a vibrantly viridian garden. There was a grove of trees in the deepest part of the garden, and that was the location of the small cottage in which he resided.

Although it looked shabby on the outside, the inside of the cottage was clean, and well furnished with electronic appliances and furniture. Most importantly though, since it was within school grounds commuting to school was a breeze.

Because of a certain incident that had occurred, Kurou had only been in the academy for two weeks when he was hospitalised. Today was the day he was discharged. He hadn't lived in the cottage for very long, but he was already starting to get attached to the place.

"…?"

Kurou suddenly came to a halt, placing his hand on the katana strapped to his waist. Moving his head slightly, he scanned his surroundings.

He had already passed the garden and was now entering into the grove. The trees weren't particularly

densely clumped together, but there were still numerous places for someone to hide themselves in.

For a brief second, he felt someone's presence.

He didn't think he was mistaken. Being hospitalised meant his body had deteriorated somewhat, but it couldn't have dulled to the point where he would mistake something like a person's presence.

"What was that…?"

Kurou took his hand off his katana.

This was the Sword Academy— a place for people who chased after all aspects of the sword. It wouldn't be strange for someone to be radiating a dangerous presence.

Deciding the situation was fine after all, Kurou resumed walking.

Of course, his state of mind was prepared for anything to happen. The alert phase Kurou was in now could be said to be his default mode.

"Hm?"

This time around, he felt it clearly. Or rather, he could hear it.

Swishing sounds could be heard, as if someone was slashing at the air with a sharp sword. A sound like that was something Kurou was extremely familiar with.

Proceeding forward slowly, just as he reached the front of his house— Kurou stopped dead in his tracks.

“Hah!”

Where the grove opened up into a clearing, there was a girl who was putting her spirit into swinging her sword .

The sunlight streamed through her golden hair, which was tied in a sidetail, she was wearing a pale beige blazer , and the hem of her miniskirt was flapping about.

The blade of the sword she was wielding was broad and thick, and it was roughly as long as she was tall. Just once look at it and it was clear that this sword was a genuine broadsword-esque blade. To a normal person, there was no way a slender girl like her would be able to handle such a large object. Even a fifteen year old male

like Kurou, who had an average constitution, would find lifting something like that up tough, to say nothing of swinging it about.

However, the blonde girl was handling it lightly—even wielding it single-handedly on occasion. Her practice swings were stirring up wind in the grove, causing the trees to sway and their trunks to bend. It was scenery that didn't look rooted in reality at all.

She was an alien, a being from another world known as a Swordie. Swordies could crush rock with their bare hands, and sprint faster than the wind. From the moment they were born, Swordies possessed speed and power that were superior to normal humans.

Above all else though, Swordies were a race that was proficient with the sword from the time they were born into the world. She wasn't just swinging her sword using brute force, but with a graceful swordsmanship that belied her age of fifteen. Her sword looked like it could easily cut through iron.

A human like Kurou was completely different. Although appearance wise humans and Swordies looked alike, they were two completely different living organisms.

"Rou…?"

"Yo."

The blonde girl— Sefi stopped her swinging, staring blankly at Kurou in surprise.

"How long have you been standing there?"

"Just now. More importantly Sefi, what are you doing here?"

Sefi was also a student of the academy, but her residence was at the girls' dormitory.

"It's fine, isn't it? Today's a Sunday. I'm free to do whatever I like, wherever I like."

Sefi wasn't being honest as she replied, sheathing her sword in its scabbard, which was propped up against one of the trees nearby. Sheathing a sword that big

should have been troublesome, but she did it with an ease that suggested she was used to this motion.

"Speaking of which, you're finally discharged. I was wondering how long you were going to spend being cooped up in there."

"I'm a human, you know. I got a deep gouging wound on my shoulder, not to mentioned I was slashed in various other places. The doctor remarked that the fact that I could be discharged in two week was already a miracle of sorts."

Kurou lightly patted his left shoulder. There was some stiffness left in it, but it had roughly healed from the incident two weeks ago.

"Humans are such inconvenient creatures. Well, in anycase… W-w-w-w-el-co…"

"Oh, it's Kurou. I thought you'd only be back in the afternoon."

A carefree voice spoke, drowning out what Sefi was trying to say.

He wasn't sure when exactly she had arrived, but a girl with long black hair was now standing next to the both of them.

Sakurai Hinako. Kurou's housemate, and due to certain circumstances he was also her bodyguard.

"… wait, what's with that outfit?!"

Kurou's eyes widened in surprise.

He was looking at something he had gotten used to seeing recently— actually, that wasn't exactly right.

When he had been hospitalised, he hadn't even seen something like this once before.

Currently Hinako was wearing a nurse uniform that was an eye-catching pink colour. Rather conscientiously, her nurse cap was pink as well.

Her skirt was dangerously short, till the point it barely concealed her panties.

Above all else though, because the uniform was tightly fitting to her body, Hinako's ample bosom stood out, revealing just how well stacked she really was.

If nurses actually wore such titillating uniforms, male patients would deliberately injure themselves to receive attention.

"… Hinako, what happened to your maid uniform?"

"I got sick of it."

Hinako spoke without hesitation.

Before Kurou had been hospitalised, Hinako had worn a maid outfit and pledged to serve him, and now Kurou wondered what had happened to that pledge.

"You hadn't recovered yet Kuro, so I thought I'd wear this and nurse you back to full health."

"That would have been some fine service, but… hang on. Where did you even get that nurse uniform in the first place?"

"It was inside the closet of clothes Manaka gave to me."

"That woman… Such a needless souvenir to leave behind."

Kurou felt a headache coming on.

Manaka was his master's younger sister, as well as his former boss. As someone who lived life acting on whims, she was also the one who dressed Hinako up in an excessively erotic maid uniform in the first place.

She was currently missing, but even when she was gone she was still causing Kurou problems.

"I tried to stop her as well, but as you can see… In any case, why don't we enter the house first?"

"I guess you're right."

Kurou nodded at Sefi. There was no point in continuing to stand outside the house and talk. Lightly shaking his head, he started to walk. However, before he could even take a step, he finally noticed his house.

"Huuuuuuhhhhhh!?"

He let out a cry of surprise.

Disregarding what the inside looked like, the cottage Kurou lived in looked shabby on the outside, and was a nondescript building.

However, the building in front of Kurou was a brand new two storied house that looked like it had been prefabricated.

"What has my house become…"

"Ah, that's right, I didn't tell you."

Resting her giant sword on her shoulders, Sefi looked up at the small cottage— or rather, big house.

"While you were hospitalised, I had your house renovated. To be honest, it was just completed yesterday."

"But why was it even renovated in the first place…?"

Because of his assignment as her bodyguard, Kurou and Hinako both lived in the small cottage together. Although it was a little cramped, it wasn't as if the place was hindering them in any way.

"It's not good for a boy and girl of the same age to be living together. I did it so as to maintain public morals and also so that Rou wouldn't do anything perverted to Hina."

Sefi glanced over at both Kurou and Hinako with a meaningful look in her eyes.

"So, I'll be living here with the both of you from now on. I won't accept any protests."

"Eh…"

Sefi beamed happily at the speechless Kurou.

Hinako seemed to have already been informed of this arrangement, as she was adjusting the position of her cap with a look on her face that suggested she was fine with anything.

"I requested the academy to build it. In the future, it will be used for the security guards in the garden to rest."

Kurou nodded, chuckling wryly on the inside. It was hard to the academy to refuse any of Sefi's requests. She was a Swordie with that much influence and power after all.

Living together with Hinako was something that was unavoidable and he couldn't cancel, but now that Sefi was living together with them…

"So in other words… It's an all I can sexually harass Sefi buffet from dawn to dusk?!"

"Like hell it is!"

Sefi yelled back at him in a rough tone.

It was a pity she had denied his request, but there was no denying that Sefi was now going to live with them.

Well, it wasn't like he was going to raise any objections in the first place. Kurou's hand lightly touched the katana that was by his side.

Other than wondering what would happen to this sword, it was far less troublesome to just accept whatever fate had in store for him.

This was a lesson he had learnt from the various incidents that had occurred before being hospitalised.

There can Only be One Victor!

The day after Kurou had been discharged.

Kurou was standing inside the grove of trees about a hundred metres away from his new house.

Wearing the uniform of the academy, both hands were gripped tightly onto his sword as he lifted it into a raised position.

Without giving off any fighting spirit or vigour, he suddenly brought the sword down in a flash. Returning the sword to the raised position, he repeated swinging his sword.

Obviously, he wasn't able to practice his swordsmanship while he was in the hospital. Also he had spent the whole of yesterday moving his things around in the new house, so other than cleaning he hadn't been able to do anything else.

Because he hadn't been able to do rehabilitation, this training was essential. As expected, his current state was much weaker than normal.

Even so, Kurou didn't feel like he would lose to Sefi now. Although it might seem a little rude to Sefi, he had confidence that if they were to fight a hundred battles he would win every one of them.

This is your loss, Kurou—

How many times had the Sword Saint Hyouka, who was also his master, said those words to him?

The Seven Swords was a title given to the strongest amongst the Swordies.

Within the Seven Swords, the most brilliant of them was given the title of Sword Saint.

Kurou had spent the better part of seven years crossing blades with her on a daily basis. And each time he had been beaten by her. For the strongest swordswoman amongst the Swordies, there was no way a human brat like Kurou could ever win against her, and Hyouka's victories were all but a forgone conclusion.

However, he didn't plan on losing to anyone else other than the Sword Saint. No matter what the circumstances.

Even if his physical ability had gone down, or his body had dulled, Kurou wasn't going to use those as excuses to lose.

Kurou swung his blade down even harder.

Again, and again, he repeated the motion.

After reaching two hundred repetitions— Kurou stopped.

Tilting his neck slightly, he slowly sheathed his sword. As he had just been discharged from the hospital, it would be best if he didn't exert himself any more than this. There was a fine line between training and ruining his body.

Using a towel to wipe his sweat, he returned back home.

As today was a Monday, he obviously planned on going to school, but there was still time. Taking a shower now would be a hassle, but felt he should at least wash his face.

Previously, home was just a small cottage with very little floor space, but now it was a two story building, so the number of rooms had increased.

The living room, kitchen, bath, toilet and Kurou's room were located on the first floor. Sefi's and Hinako's rooms were on the second floor, Kurou being forbidden up there. As this moment, Kurou didn't feel like breaking that particular restriction. If he was going to sneak up there, it would only be after he had meticulously planned and prepared beforehand.

Entering the house, he headed to the washroom.

A nice smell wafted over, which probably meant Sefi was in the kitchen cooking breakfast. Cooking was one of her interests, and she was a pretty good one at that. The proof of that was the meal she had prepared yesterday, which had satisfied Kurou.

"It's great I get to eat good food every day from now on!"

Kurou and Hinako both couldn't cook. Especially Hinako, who couldn't even do something as simple as preparing instant ramen. Now that Sefi was here, Kurou felt relief over his eating arrangements.

While imagining what was for breakfast, Kurou opened the door to the washroom.

"…"

"… Hm?"

Kurou tilted his head slightly.

It had totally slipped his mind, but the washroom in the new house also doubled up as the changing room for the bath.

"R-Rou…?"

And because of that, there was nothing strange about Sefi being in the washroom in a stage of undress.

On the contrary, Sefi was the one with a strange look on her face as she stared at Kurou, who had justed entered the washroom.

"Good morning, Sefi."

"Good morning… Wait, why are you even entering in the first place!?"

Sefi looked like she was just about to take her shower, because she was wearing nothing but a pair of white panties.

As soon as Kurou had entered she had quickly covered her chest with her hands, but the rest of her skin was almost fully exposed. Sefi's breasts were reasonably big and nicely shaped, and with them wobbling like jelly they looked soft to the touch.

"Well, I was thinking I might as well take a shower."

"If that's the case then do it after I'm done!"

"But if we shower together we can save on the water bill, right?"

"I'll pay for my portion of the water bill, so let me shower alone!"

There was no real need to appeal to him like that, but Sefi was in a panic so she had just blurted out something that didn't make sense at all.

"By the way, I can't really see your chest very well so would you mind moving your hands away?"

"I'm keeping them there so you can't see them!"

She had already removed her bra, so other than her chest being covered by her hands, Kurou had a clear view of everything else. Even so, his selfishness made him unsatisfied even though he was already seeing her hands bra.

"Ah, enough! Why are we talking normally like nothing's wrong!? Hurry up and get out! If you don't leave in three seconds, I will smash this changing room and you!"

"So you're going to go wild again, huh…"

Kurou murmured like it was someone else's problem.

The truth was, with Sefi's power, she could easily destroy the whole house, to say nothing of a single room.

"Guess it can't be helped then…"

Kurou spent two seconds burning the sight of Sefi's chest into his eyes, before fleeing out of the washroom like a frightened hare in the last second remaining.

It was only because Kurou possessed amazing physical ability for a human that he was able to move that quickly.

"Idiot idiot idiot—!"

He could hear Sefi's stream of abuse from behind the closed door.

Considering that he had stared at her half-naked body with all his might as well as continued to stay inside the toilet, the fact that Sefi hadn't resorted to violence was a reflection of her kind nature.

Although, if he did go too far with his sexual harassment, who'd know what Sefi might do then.

"Still, I did get to see something nice this early in the morning…"

"Good for you…"

"Woah!"

As Kurou was having a lewd look on his face, a voice suddenly cut him off.

When he finally noticed his surroundings, Hinako was already standing next to him, staring at Kurou intently.

"As always Kuro, you're up to your sexual harassment again…"

"Wouldn't it be an insult to a beautiful lady if I saw her naked figure but turned and ran away? It would make it seem like I had just seen something weird."

"Kuro, that was a fantastic excuse to give…"

From the bottom of her heart, Hinako was left dumbfounded by Kurou.

Today Hinako was wearing that nurse outfit again. Having said that though, she hadn't nursed him yesterday. She was just a girl who liked wearing particular outfits without doing any work in particular.

"Hm? If Sefi's in the bath, why is there such a nice smell of food? Did she already cook breakfast?"

"I made breakfast this morning. It will be ready soon, so please head to the living room."

"Ehhhhhh, Hinako cooked!? That's impossible!"

"There's no reason for you to be surprised to that extent…"

No, there is, thought Kurou as he gazed at Hinako suspiciously.

Based on Kurou's experience, Hinako could not even discern how to use a vacuum so it was certainly possible that she had never cooked before.

"What happened to this world during my stay at the hospital……"

"Please don't mention a drastic change occurring to the world just because I mastered a skill. Even a person like me will mature."

Hinako swiftly turned around and headed back towards the kitchen.

“Uh……”

Hinako cooking, huh————

I should probably have an antacid on hand, thought Kurou as he unexpectedly began to panic.

The living room of their new home was carpeted. Other than the TV, table, and a small cupboard, there were essentially no other pieces of furniture or appliances. It was a quite plainly adorned room.

Kurou was sitting right in front of the table at the center of the room.

“Hey Kuro, please eat while it’s still hot.”

“……”

Hinako emphatically placed a plate down on the table.

The dish consisted of rice, eggs, as well as thinly sliced pork meat. It had been cooked with onions and carrots, plus it was seasoned————in essence it was char siu rice.

Although Sefi had not returned from the shower room yet, it was probably best to eat now before it became cold .

“Thank you for the meal.”

Kurou politely pressed his hands together and proceeded to slowly scoop up some of the char siu rice with a spoon, placing it in his mouth.

“Eh? Not bad.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?”

“Nothing, nothing at all.”

Upon noticing Hinako’s teary eyes looking his way, Kurou immediately began denying that there was anything to it.

To have dabbled in the thought of an antacid seemed to be very disrespectful. Hinako performed far beyond

expectations in creating an edible dish, thus he stated as such.

Even its rich flavor suited Kurou's taste. Kurou did not utter a word as he moved the spoon around and scarfed down the char siu rice.

"……Mmm, tasty. Thank you for the meal."

Kurou set his spoon down and pressed his hands together once again.

"That said, why were you continuously making char siu rice since morning?"

"Jeez, to be questioning me now after you've already eaten."

"Hey Sefi, you done showering?"

Sefi, having exited the showers, entered the living room and sat across from Kurou.

"You live such a sloppy lifestyle Kurou. Having food prepared and served right to you really makes you look like an imbecile. Didn't you used to say no matter what you eat, it will taste delicious?"

"Whatever do you mean?"

Kurou chuckled as he shook his head.

"Something more delicious than Sefi, such a thing cannot possibly exist in this universe……"

"Now you're asking for it."

Sefi tightly clenched her fists while staring him down with an austere expression.

Kurou wanting to someday eat Sefi, that was indeed the truth.

"I'm glad that you like it Kuro. Also, here's a bento."

"Huh?"

Kurou was handed a bento box from Hinako, his eyes flickered in surprise.

That slightly larger than usual bento box was jam-packed with char siu rice.

"By the way, for dinner we are having more nutritious char siu rice that is laden with pork."

"Eh——, that sounds pretty good."

"Are you serious!?"

Sefi shouted at the top of her lungs while Kurou and Hinako took a glance at each other.

"To think I thought Rou was more ridiculous! Hina, you can't even make anything else!?"

"Well, for her to be able to make one dish, isn't that still amazing? If it were me, this cutting, cooking, steaming and such, I could never accomplish such tasks."

"Then again, Rou is also way too lax about this……"

From the looks of it, Sefi was also quite unpleased with Kurou's response.

In regards to Kurou's eating habits, he was not particularly picky when it came to taste.

"For now, Hina and I will just alternate cooking every other day. However, even that is quite unfavorable."

"How so?"

"My taste buds are quite delicate. I could never eat something as oily as this early in the morning."

"In that case, couldn't you just teach Hinako how to cook?"

"Of course, did you think I was going to let her make the same thing every time!?"

Hmm, Kurou pondered as he drank a sip of tea.

He noticed it ever since yesterday. It seemed Sefi and Hinako had already gotten along quite well. With the endearing nickname, "Hina", it probably served as a proof of friendship.

With the exception of being a bit over the top when making the char siu rice, Hinako's cooking appeared to be learned through Sefi.

The situation had certainly become quite perplexing.

Sefi and Hinako————who would have ever known that their relations would reach the point where they would live under the same roof. For them to even be conversing was quite unfathomable.

Seventy years ago, at that time the whole world was enveloped in war.

The Great War was at a point where neither side would budge and as each nation exhausted their resources, an extraordinary change suddenly occurred——

Countless portals that were connected to another world had their gates opened up. Following that, the entire world was trampled upon by the Swordies who swarmed in————

The victor of the Great War was the Swordies.

To add to that, the portals disappeared just as instantaneously as when they first appeared. Having lost access to their homeworld, the Swordies decided to turn Japan into their new homeworld and implemented a new government system.

For the Swordies who prevailed and became the dominant ones, they governed the humans———— specifically the Japanese. With the prevalence of discrimination, there clearly was a rift between the two sides.

Sefi was the daughter of the four rulers who were at the pinnacle of the Swordie government————she was the princess of the four generals.

On the flip side, Hinako was a human. The difference in status between her and Sefi was poles apart.

Normally speaking, two people like them————wait , including Kurou, having the three of them eating the same meal under the same roof was just unimaginable.

"……Even so, you're such a good person for eating the char siu rice after all."

"What nonsense. If it were left aside as such it'd be a huge waste!"

As Sefi was wolfing down the char siu rice, she loudly shouted at Kurou.

"More like if it were Sefi's leftovers, it would fetch a high price from Kuro……"

"That wasn't necessary you know!"

It appeared that their relationship had turned for the better. Kurou's eyes filled with warmth as he gazed at the two girls.

In present day Japan, the way Swordies treated human was always filled with prejudice to some extent.

However, Sefi was a notable exception. Sefi, who was at the zenith of status, had no issues with the lower class humans. Furthermore, she had been friends with Kurou since childhood, so perhaps that contributed to it as well.

No matter how one looked at it, it was great that Sefi had no intentions of behaving in such silly discriminatory ways.

Hinako, because of the unique conditions she was raised under, was unfamiliar with the customs of modern day Japan————such as the discrimination between humans and Swordies. Kurou thought it was also nice that Hinako was not the type to be obsequiously acting inferior.

"Rou, what are you fixated on? Hurry up and finish eating, then let's go to school————"

"Hmm? What's the matter Sefi?"

Sefi's gaze was honed onto one spot. Kurou turned his head and followed her line of sight.

"What a pleasant aroma wafting around this early in the morning. I truly envy your dietary lifestyle, Kurou."

"……Deputy?"

Kurou muttered.

When did she arrive? A woman was standing at the entrance of the living room.

She was tall and had her gleaming brown hair tied behind her. She wore a black blazer over her white shirt, a tight fitting miniskirt, and a red overcoat draped on as usual. Like a samurai, she had her longsword and dagger hanging by her waist.

"What is a deputy?"

Hinako was not in the least surprised with the intruder as she nonchalantly questioned.

"The deputy is just the deputy. She's a prestigious member of the Sabers, second only to the director."

Kurou appropriately answered.

The so-called Sabers was the name of the public security force that Kurou was affiliated with.

The black blazer and overcoat which the deputy was wearing was the uniform of the Sabers.

Within the capital of Japan————Tokyo Swordia, the police would investigate ordinary criminals while the Sabers were responsible for terrorist activities. The cops primarily consisted of humans. In contrast to that, members of the Sabers were practically all Swordies. However, Kurou was the sole human member within the Sabers.

"It's just as Kurou explained. Oh that's right, Sefi-sama , this is our first time meeting each other. I'm the Sabers' deputy, Sabina."

"……I'm Sefi. Since I'm just a student, there's no need to be so formal."

"Understood."

Despite her nodding, the deputy still had not changed her courtesies. It was a sharp contrast from her perfunctory tone towards Kurou.

"Well, it doesn't really matter. Deputy, why are you here?"

"Things have gotten quite riled up, I'll explain later. Just follow me, and Sefi-sama, would you please join us as well?"

"Umm, sure."

After Sefi nodded, the deputy departed from the living room without waiting for Kurou's response.

Of course to Kurou, since she was his superior, if she had said to "come with" then he would be obliged to follow.

Kurou and Sefi glanced at each other, and then nodded towards Hinako.

"Will you be ok by yourself Hinako?"

"I believe so."

Hinako stoically nodded.

Due to certain circumstances, she was now guarded by Kurou. However, Kurou was also hospitalized for two weeks. During that time, there was not a chance that she would be left without a replacement bodyguard.

Although it was not visible, there was someone protecting Hinako from somewhere unbeknownst to them————

Even Kurou knew about that and Hinako probably heard about it too.

"Time to go Kurou."

Of course, Sefi understood as well.

Right now, there would not be any problems even if Hinako was left alone. Kurou stood up from his seat and walked towards the door along with Sefi.

Surprisingly, the place the deputy brought them to was nearby.

Within the Sword Academy, excluding the main campus that encompassed all grades, there was an additional secondary campus that contained a group of special classrooms and teacher facilities.

"It's right here."

The deputy halted right in front of a conference room on the second floor of the secondary campus building.

Stationed in front of the conference room door were two girls that stood like soldiers. Upon seeing the two of them, Sefi revealed an astonished expression.

"Romis, Remis, why are you two……I guess there's no point in asking."

The girl standing on the left side of the door nodded in silence to Sefi.

The two known as Romis and Remis possessed nearly matching outer features. One swift look and it was

obvious that they were twins. Whether it was their facial complexion or their body type, it was all identical. They were approximately twenty years of age.
Appearance-wise they looked a bit inanimate, perhaps due to their stoic expressions. However, they could be considered as pure beauties as well.

Both of them had silver hair extending to their backs. They were wearing a thin, white-toned shirt that had silver lines throughout along with a similar style white miniskirt. Even the scabbard and hilt of their slender swords were white. The only piece that was different was the black mantle draped over their shoulders.

Their attire was the formalwear of the Sword Princess.

Before a Swordie reached eighteen years-old, they can attain the title of Swordsman. The Swordsman title was conferred to them by their masters or school teachers. Kurou was given the title by his master——Sword Saint Hyouka. With the title, one could enlist in the army or enter a police-related occupation that required the use of a sword.

Furthermore, the position that surpassed the Swordsman was the Sword Princess.

Those who are able to attain the title are few and far in between and needless to say, those who did were all exceptional with the sword. Their numbers were scarce, yet Romis and Remis are two Sword Princesses. To add to that, the deputy was one as well.

Kurou's line of sight shifted away from them as he began sprucing himself up. He used his hands to straighten out his hair and button up his unbuttoned shirt. Kurou understood that the two twin Sword Princesses served as bodyguards for a certain someone.

The person awaiting them was not someone you could just show up all disheveled for.

"Excuse us."

As Kurou deftly straightened out his appearance, the deputy knocked on the conference room door.

As soon as the "please come in" response was heard, the deputy entered the conference room. Sefi and Kurou followed her inside.

The conference room seemed unusually spacious.

Normally there would be tables and chairs lined up around the room. Here however, there was only one table in the depths of the room. On the table there lay a laptop and a pile of documents spread across it.

The young woman that was sitting there stood up and smiled.

“Welcome Sefi.”

Although she was calm, her voice was quite resounding. She maintained a stern appearance and exuded an intense willpower from her eyes. Her radiant blonde hair was trimmed into a short hairstyle. Her dark blue dress resembled military attire, yet the style was also quite evident from the uniform.

“It’s been a while Onee-sama.”

Sefi walked towards the center of the room and politely lowered her head.

Indeed, the person wearing the dress was a woman named Sylphy, Sefi’s older sister.

She was the eldest daughter of the supreme four generals and she was their successor, hence the reason she wore a military style dress. Moreover, due to the four generals' pedigree, that family tradition had been kept even until now.

Sylphy was twenty-six years old and although she was still very young, she had assumed the role of a government official.

The four generals were the zenith of the Swordie government and ranked below them were the government officials and the general populace. In fact, the government's powers consisted of making practically all of the important legislation decisions and the four generals who were above them only handled the more serious cases.

In other words, Sylphy had already become the backbone of the country and it was established that she would be the one to hold the supreme position.

With a well-behaved attitude, Kurou stayed near a window in the room and waited. As a human, he could

not act all grandiose and be talkative in front of Sylphy. Even as a Swordie and being in charge of the Sabers organization, the deputy stayed a step behind Sefi.

Of course, Sefi had also discerned this level of subtlety. As a result, only she could engage in conversation with Sylphy. She faced her sister and spoke up.

"Onee-sama, why did you come to the academy?"

"So I could see Sefi……that's what I would like to say. However, this is not the case. The incident this time even requires the government to set up a committee of inquiry and I was elected as a member."

Sylphy shrugged her shoulders. She sighed as she sat back in her chair again.

"Of course, it's Manaka's————the incident involving the Blazes. It was also determined that the academy where the incident spawned should have an investigation office established. Thus, we'll be borrowing this conference room."

As she spoke, Sylphy smiled towards her sister.

Such a smile and that bright, beaming voice would surely bring about an uplift in mood. Sylphy possessed what seemed to be the qualities of a natural born leader.

However, Kurou also knew that Sylphy carried other traits as well……

"Well then, please let me hear the report Kurou."

"Yes."

Despite suddenly hearing himself called upon, Kurou did not waver. Since he would not be invited without intention, he predicted that it was bound to happen. He also realized that the deputy probably summoned him to give the report while Sefi was to provide supplementary explanations if needed.

Kurou began explaining the chain of events.

First of all, in the human residential areas of the Outer Human Region of Tokyo Swordia, there were numerous tsujigiri incidents. The criminals of those incidents were first-year students from the Sword Academy who were

the first and second ranked academically in the school. Although the victims of the crimes were deadbeats, murder was still murder.

Originally, punitive measures were to be taken for these criminals. However, it was no longer possible.

Migune, the number one ranked student, was found dead on the side of the road. Following that, the second ranked Freya was also killed during the elimination tournament that was set for every grade.

"The person who murdered both of them was a first-year student from the Sword Academy. Her name is Neena."

She was Sefi's friend who had braids tied together and wore glasses, which was a rare sight for Swordies.

No, Neena was not an ordinary Swordie. She was————what was known as a Blaze, a race that especially craved combat even among Swordies.

The Blazes and Swordies had hostile relations. However, Neena's assassination of Migune and Freya was unrelated to the Blaze incident.

Neena's reason for killing the two was quite meager. Neena could not forgive Migune and Freya who engaged in such trifling matters such as murdering those hooligans. Moreover, to Neena, who was a Blaze, none of the first-years were on par to be her opponent.

"However, from her statements and actions, Neena's true objective was to kill Sefi."

"That's right Onee-sama, Neena truly exuded killing intent towards me."

"What a dangerous situation."

Sylphy, who had been tacitly listening to Kurou's report and then heard Sefi's supporting claim, changed her expression for the first time. Although Neena was unsuccessful in killing Sefi, there was no way she could just turn a blind eye towards her sister's perilous encounter.

"Well then, that means the person who assigned her the target was————Sword General Manaka?"

"Yes, Sylphy-sama."

Sword General Manaka————was someone who Neena looked up to and she referred to her as “ Onee-sama”. Having directed Neena to engage in covert operations, Manaka was the mastermind behind it all.

To Kurou, she was his master’s, Sword Saint Hyouka’s , little sister as well as the director, thus making her his superior.

For a human, Kurou was already extremely formidable . Despite that, it was nigh impossible for him to match up against Sword General Manaka in combat. For him to be able to fend her off was already a miracle. At the expense of just a two week stay at the hospital, it must have been a fluke.

“My report concludes here.”

“I see, thank you very much Kurou.”

Sylphy nodded extensively. With Sylphy’s pinnacle status, such displays of gratitude were practically unthinkable towards a human like Kurou.

Perhaps it was because Kurou was affiliated with the Sabers, or maybe it was due to him being the Sword Saint's disciple?

"So you were immediately hospitalized afterwards, that means you're not clear on what ensued after that right?"

"Indeed, everything I know from then on was from TV news broadcasts."

Kurou mannerly nodded.

According to the news, Sword General Manaka had already been stripped of her title.

Manaka and the anti-government faction were in cahoots, she killed Sabers members, and then fled————that was the extent of the reporting. It refrained from disclosing the existence of the Blazes.

"Of course, we are also investigating. Within the members of the Seven Swords, two government chambers, business directors, the wealthy, and within the upper echelons of society, the Blazes who may have infiltrated have been practically left unhindered despite

background checks. Not only do we want to uncover the Blazes, we are also forced to examine Swordies and humans who have had relations with Blazes as well as the flow of people and money."

"Sounds like a headache……"

Such endless investigating would make one feel aggravated just from thinking about it.

"Tell me about it. Of course, we investigate any Blaze related incidents. Although they reside within their so-called 'refuge', there are quite a few whose whereabouts are unknown. However, it's unclear whether or not those untraceable Blazes have been in contact with anti-government organizations. Furthermore, because the Blaze population significantly decreased after the war, it's unclear how many were confined within the refuge. A lot of records are missing from that place as well."

Although Kurou had predicted such an outcome, it was still hard to imagine carrying forth that kind of investigating.

"There are plenty of things I'm unsure of, particularly Manaka's whereabouts. Despite our utmost efforts to track her……"

Sylphy casted a glance towards the deputy who began to speak.

"Even though the Sabers also fielded a small investigative unit to track down our former director, ever since her escape from the Sword Academy we haven't been able to find her trail. Even if we do encounter her……"

"Containing Manaka would be a daunting task and let's not even get into arresting her. Assuming we can confirm her place of residence, we'll come up with countermeasures."

Sylphy sounded quite exasperated as she ruffled her cheeks.

Specifically what should be done, that was what Kurou had the hardest time grasping. Although she was a traitor, Manaka was undoubtedly selected as a Seven

Sword based on her strength. It would still be a massive struggle even if a couple Sword Princesses were utilized in capturing her.

"The Sabers have also added more female members to reinforce our combat squad. Originally, we anticipated Kurou to return to us."

"Kurou has his studies as well. Even if Manaka is a traitor, she definitely ordered the protection of the daughter of the Sun Cult founder. Kurou has to continue protecting Sakurai Hinako. Of course, he should also be able to continue going to school without an issue."

"Are you sure that's ok?"

Kurou was slightly caught off guard by this.

With the appearance of a Blaze traitor group, Kurou had also considered the possibility of being recalled as a member of the Sabers, especially since Kurou and Manaka's fates were deeply linked.

"Honestly, even the government is uncertain at to what measures should be taken."

Sylphy sighed as she continued to ruffle her cheeks.

"I believe we should determine our course of action as soon as possible. However, despite being a member, I'm still quite young. I certainly don't have the credibility to make such irresponsible remarks towards a situation like this. The situation has clearly altered already."

"Altered? What's going on Onee-sama?

Sefi questioned her with a serious expression. From the looks of it, even Sefi was unfamiliar with the details of the situation.

"During these past two weeks, five Swordie officials, or perhaps they were business directors, have been killed ."

"Five people……were they all important individuals?"

"It's not exactly like that. They all have some sort of status, but it's not like they're irreplaceable. Well, I guess you can say the gears of society are now shifting."

Kurou thought that was quite an overstatement, however he did not voice his opinion. Voicing such thoughtlessness was impermissible.

"And, there's one peculiar incident out of the five deaths."

"A peculiar incident?"

Kurou tilted his head.

"Out of these five incidents, four of them were clean one-hit kills. However, in one of those incidents, the corpse was crudely cut apart. I've seen the autopsy report as well, it's akin to an outsider's swordsmanship. Perhaps they might not even be affiliated with the Blazes."

"I see……"

Kurou only knew two Blazes. However, those two were exceptional sword wielders who were strong beyond words. It was difficult to imagine the Blazes using such unnecessary sword maneuvers.

"However, there's another bizarre occurrence. Everyone who was slaughtered was apparently frozen or electrocuted, with that being the last attack they suffered."

"……Perhaps the murders are all independent from one another?"

"Besides the sword wounds, there were traces of impact wounds from being hit by a truck as well. Basically this one incident is quite shrouded in mystery……however, this was written in the report you submitted before your hospital stay correct?"

"Those were mystic arts."

Kurou slowly nodded his head.

It was said that in the past, there were three reasons why Swordies attained victory.

One was of course a Swordie's overwhelming physical capabilities and sword prowess.

The second was mystic arts————controlling flames, ice, and lightning, that sort of magical ability. To be able to attack from afar, they assisted the Swordies in their piercing attack.

Even though practically every Swordie was able to use this sort of power during the Great War, for some reason

countless individuals lost their mystic art abilities once the portals closed and their contact with their homeworld was severed.

The generations of Swordies born after the war were innately unable to use mystic arts and could never learn to use them at all.

However, Manaka and Neena, both of whom had battled against Kurou, were able to manipulate the powers of the mystic arts.

"It was said that the mystic arts were originally passed along to the Swordies by the Blazes. For that group to be able to use mystic arts in the present era isn't really inconceivable. Compared to this, to specifically use mystic arts as their final strike, it's understandable that this was clearly meant to provoke us. However, this is really what's concerning. It's like they are saying 'come get us.'"

Kurou felt very impressed. For Sylphy to have contemplated about it to such extent, no wonder she became a government official at such a young age. Even

Kurou did not really read much into the use of mystic arts. Despite the danger factors, overall this was emblematic of the Blazes.

"Well, that's why I'm saying that the Blazes are on the move again. Because of that, we must determine suitable measures right away. However, the only thing we are capable of doing right now is just investigating the incident involving Manaka."

"……Umm, Onee-sama."

Sefi apprehensively raised her hand.

"Yes Sefi?"

"Why was Neena so intent on killing me? Although, she didn't seem quite sure herself since she was probably just ordered to do so."

"Ah, I don't know but I can deduce a reason."

Sylphy once again rested her elbows on the table and crossed her hands in front of her face.

"Do you know about the genocide and isolation of the Blazes?"

"Yes."

Kurou had also heard about this matter. Even among Swordies, the Blazes were particularly adept in battle and were extremely dynamic during the Great War. After the war, they were rejected by the government for their thirst for battle and being too powerful, thus leading to their cleansing.

To add to that, the survivors of the cleansing resided in an isolated area. They were not permitted to wield swords in an effort to curb their dangerous disposition.

"Seventy years ago, the greatest proponent of the cleansing and isolation policy was one of the four generals of the past————Lanafi. Known as the great strategist————she was our great grandmother."

"Eh? Our great grandmother————so there's still people carrying a grudge from way back then!?"

Sefi was greatly astonished. In reality, being the one whose life was sought after, it was unthinkable how someone could carry a grudge from over seventy years ago.

"Although it's regrettable, our great grandmother departed from this world thirty years ago. Hence, it's very possible that they would target her great grandchildren. Presently within our family, the one whose security measures are the most lacking would be Sefi."

That statement was understandable, yet confusing at the same time.

The Blazes had been isolated even till now and although they were Swordies with a penchant for swords , they were unable to wield swords or enlist in the police department and military battle squads.

Getting revenge due to the current state of hate and suffering, Kurou could understand such a notion. However……

"You have a puzzled expression there Kurou. You are a notable swordsman, but it seems as if you will never understand a person's emotions."

"I apologize, that's because I've been in the mountains every day until a year ago……"

During the seven years he grew up there, he lived together with the Sword Saint and his fellow disciple, Lars. Although they would occasionally be paid a visit by those seeking the Sword Saint, Kurou basically had no interactions with other people.

“Listen up Kurou.”

Sylphy calmly began to speak.

“Grudges don’t necessarily dissipate over time. Just like how you rigorously hone a technique, the fangs of revenge are sharpened over a long period of time. Even among those Blazes who experienced the cleansing seventy years ago, there will be those who will never let go. Perhaps the mastermind behind planning these treacherous acts is that sort of person. These so-called emotions———are unexpectedly unyielding objects.

Sylphy, who had stated as such, appeared to be pretty excited.

Perhaps she too possessed an unyielding heart———Kurou was pretty sure of that.

The door to the conference room opened.

Since the deputy mentioned that she still had work to attend to, she decided to return to Sabers headquarters. With the disappearance of the director, the deputy inherited her responsibilities so the work that she had to do was probably a mountainous task.

If it were possible, Kurou also wished to go back. However, Sylphy still had things to say.

“Sefi-tan!”

“Eh!?”

The moment Kurou directed his eyes towards the door , a peculiar change occurred. He turned his head and noticed that Sylphy was tightly hugging Sefi while frenziedly rubbing against her cheeks.

“W-Wait a sec Onee-sama!”

“Ha——, onee-sama has been really lonely. Despite clearly being able to go to school from our house, Sefi-tan chose to dorm at the school.”

She was unmistakably a sis-con.

Kurou was particularly surprised when the successor of the four generals revealed such a nonsensical expression.

Sylphy was the Sword Saint's friend. In the past, Sylphy would head to the mountains to visit the Sword Saint. The only reason Kurou and Sefi met back when they were just little kids was because Sefi tagged along with Sylphy.

Of course, when it came to Sylphy's heavy case of the sis-con syndrome, Kurou was also very knowledgeable on that matter.

"I-I'm already 16, I should be more independent!"

"Huh——, Sefi-tan is maturing so remarkably. It makes me feel both excited and lonesome. I definitely wish I could let you rest on my lap for another ten years. "

"T-Ten years is a bit……"

Sefi's face stiffened.

How can a person even call ten more years of that independence? It would not be surprising to see a person marry at that age. Sylphy's overprotection had gone past the deep end.

"Say Sefi-tan, there are no strange cretins eying you right?"

"……O-Of course not."

Kurou was probably conscious of the minute pause in Sefi's response.

Rather, that strange cretin was still within the conference room. Of course, Kurou was going to avoid saying anything unnecessary.

"Sefi-tan must retain her purity till marriage. Actually, even if you do get married you must still retain your beauty."

"……Onee-sama, that's outrageous."

"As long as you stay a virgin I won't mind anything else they do to you ok?"

Of course, Kurou kept silent. If his sexual harassment of Sefi was revealed to Sylphy, things could get hairy.

Just by utilizing her authority, Sylphy could probably put a human like Kurou to death with ease.

"Oh yeah Kurou, allow me to thank you."

"Eh?"

After being suddenly called upon, Kurou was startled.

"You protected Sefi-tan from the Blazes right? Thank you so much."

"……Y-You're welcome."

Kurou politely responded. In reality, this was not really something he should have been thanked for. To Kurou, Sefi is a very important girl so guarding her was a given.

"So humble. If possible I wish to express my gratitude somehow, so a personal thanks is the least I can do."

"Then, may I ask a question?"

Kurou instantly responded.

It was something he wished to ask from the very beginning.

"If that's all you want then that's totally fine by me. So go ahead, what's your question?"

"The matter regarding the Sword Saint……how do you plan on dealing with it?"

Kurou's master, Sword Saint Hyouka.

She disappeared approximately a year ago. Being the older sister of Manaka who was a Blaze, it obviously meant that Hyouka herself was also a Blaze.

If she was untraceable, the government would probably become suspicious. As for the Sword Saint, Kurou obviously knew that the government would be unable to capture her, but his question was not in regards to that.

"For Hyouka, we have not decided on any course of action yet."

Sylphy offered a simple reply.

"For the time being, the police are currently investigating. However, it isn't an official search and it's not because of the Blaze incident either. The search started ever since her disappearance. It's true that Hyouka hid her Blaze identity, but there's no evidence that she has done anything."

"In other words, in regards to whether or not she will be arrested……"

"It won't happen. Of course, even though you guys are Hyouka's disciples, you and Lars won't be tied to the case. It's also understood that you guys have no relations with the Blazes. Rather, if they were to arrest anyone with relations to Hyouka, even I would be arrested as her friend."

"Phew……"

Sefi was relieved as she sighed.

She must have been concerned with that matter as well . Although she puts up a tough front, Sefi would always become anxious due to her overly caring nature.

"Furthermore, if a friend of hers like me is permitted to say something on the subject……I don't think Hyouka has anything to do with the rebellion or whatever. She definitely wouldn't have interest in such mundane affairs ."

Kurou felt the same way in regards to that.

Sword Saint Hyouka was a woman whose life completely revolved around the sword.

Even though she was discriminated as a Blaze and segregated, it was hard to imagine that she would hold a grudge and point her sword because of it.

"So you don't really need to concern yourself with Hyouka's situation. We don't place much emphasis on it either. In addition, there are countless things that we still don't know, such as ——this."

Sylphy returned to the front of her desk and retrieved a photo.

What was captured and enlarged on the photo was the vast blue sky————and a pure black split running down a part of it.

The portal————

After seventy years, the portal that connected directly to the Swordie homeworld had finally opened again, and then it instantly closed afterwards.

That portal was witnessed by numerous residents within Tokyo Swordia.

"Kurou, you guys don't know the cause of the portals opening right?"

"Yeah, it's because during that time I was battling against Manaka."

Kurou replied with a stern expression.

Actually, in regards to the cause behind the portal's opening, it was not like he was completely clueless.

However, if he were to mention it————it was possible that those who were close to Kurou may get enveloped by danger. Even though Sefi knew as well, it seemed she was going to remain silent.

"I can't take it anymore. If this continues, our inability will have no ends. If we aren't able to at least catch Manaka and Neena……"

Sylphy spoke as if she was frustrated. In fact, it most likely was pure frustration.

At this stage, there was practically nothing that Kurou could assist in. Even if he were to battle against Manaka again, the thought of retreating was quite enticing after contemplating the difference in their strength.

Right as he thought there was nothing else to be said, someone knocked on the door.

“Please come in.”

At some point Sylphy’s sis-con expression had vanished and she reverted back to her resolute manner of speaking.

Following that, the door was opened.

“Nice to meet you Sylphy.”

It was said in a very clear tone.

The person who came in was a girl wearing the Sword Academy’s uniform. Based on the color of her tie, she appeared to be a third-year student.

She had long, light green hair knotted behind her. Her neat appearance exuded a sense of warmth. Indeed, it

gave her a gentle complexion. Although her chest was lacking, her body could be described as belonging to that of a model.

How can a beauty like her be in this school————?

Kurou could not help but be captivated by the girl who walked past him as she headed towards Sylphy. However, he instantly realized that he was being glared at by Sefi as he frantically averted his gaze.

"I'm the Sword Academy's student council president, Isyuto."

"Ah, the student council president? It's a pleasure to meet you."

Sylphy smiled during her reply as the two of them shook hands.

"It may be quite rash of me, but there's something I wish to have your approval for. Would you mind taking a look at this?"

Isyuto handed some documents to Sylphy. After receiving them, Sylphy quickly browsed through the papers————

"I see, but did this really need an outsider like me to grant approval for? It's just this right? Well, seems fine to me."

"Thank you very much."

Isyuto politely bowed.

Sylphy warmly smiled as she returned to the front of her desk and stamped one of the documents.

"This should be fine right?"

"Yes, thank you."

Upon retrieving the document from Sylphy, Isyuto smiled.

Just what topic was the student council president and Sylphy, a government official, discussing?

Kurou and Sefi were unable to comprehend, hence they just blankly stood there.

"Hey, Isyuto-san, can you explain the situation to those two?"

"Of course, since it will soon be released anyways."

This time Isyuto stood facing Kurou and Sefi.

"You two are first-years right? How unfortunate, who would have known that the first elimination tournament after you guys enrolled into the school would be suspended."

Kurou tilted his head.

Due to Freya's death, the Sword Academy's first-year elimination matches were suspended. Kurou had no particular interest in those grade based matches so he could have cared less.

"As a result, the students will participate in a substitute event. However, it'd be boring to just restart the elimination matches so that's why we decided on something that is a bit more stimulating. Since it's a school competition, I needed Sylphy's permission."

As she stated, Isyuto quickly glanced at Sylphy.

"Despite requesting an additional matter, that's something you guys can look forward to later."

"I see, well that doesn't matter. As for this activity, what exactly is it?"

Sefi inquired from Isyuto. She was ranked number three when she enrolled into the academy and originally she had planned on earning the number one spot during the elimination matches. After being told there would be a replacement for it, there was no way she could just ignore this piece of news.

"It sort of has a game aspect to it, well, basically———__"

Isyuto once again smiled. As expected of the student council president to have such a captivating smile.

"It's going to be a battle royal."

Through the directing of the student council, the replacement event for the suspended elimination matches was set to take place.

The first battle royal bout was going to start in three days from when Kurou and Sefi were first informed of the matter.

Although the situation progressed unexpectedly quick, if they were too lax it may affect future elimination tournaments.

Currently, it was the day of the battle royal.

The first year students gathered at the sports ground of the academy.

There was a giant tent propped up on the sports ground where all the activity officials, which included teachers and upper grade students, could be seen hurriedly running around inside.

Kurou stood quite a distance away from the tent while awaiting the commencement of the event. He was wearing his school uniform as usual. As for the event, the Sword Academy treats the school uniform as formalwear and wearing it was mandatory in order to participate. Since the academy's uniforms were made from a material

that was battle convenient, it would not become a hindrance. Kurou was also ecstatic since the female participants were all wearing their miniskirt uniforms.

The equipment everyone was supposed to use was their wooden sword from practice.

He was surrounded by students and they were practically all girls.

Swordie and human societies were alike. They all went through elementary school, middle school, high school, and college for their studies. The Sword Academy's educational system was similar to a high school equivalent. However, the Swordies were a race whose life revolved around the sword. As one would expect, that topic would be incorporated throughout their studies within the Sword Academy.

The Sword Academy that Kurou and Sefi both studied at was described as the pinnacle of the Swordie educational system.

Furthermore, Swordies were different from humans. Females possessed exceptional physical capabilities and were more proficient with their swordsmanship.

Swordies also wielded light, which was a powerful source of life energy hidden within their bodies. The greater the quantity of light, the stronger the body. Due to females having a greater quantity of light compared to males, females reigned supreme whether it was in strength or speed.

As a result of the Swordie race being characterized as such, all the notable individuals gathered at the Sword Academy were naturally all girls.

Setting aside gender differences, Kurou was a human that ranked lower than a Swordie male. In most cases, standing on the sports ground of the Sword Academy like this would be unthinkable.

In fact, the girls would cast glances of contempt at Kurou for his inferior strength as a human. With that, they would sometimes also view him with curiosity, akin to having seen a rare animal.

Kurou sighed to himself.

Kurou's existence within the Sword Academy should have become gradually more apparent. Even so, being casted a peculiar gaze sure had to be annoying……

However, as a human who was raised by a Swordie and wanted to live within Swordie society, Kurou was already accustomed to this.

He was determined to live among the Swordies in the future. In Japan, Swordies were the supreme race and held many privileges. In order to receive the status of a Swordie, he decided to study at the Sword Academy.

A human can attain a Swordie's status in society. However, normally humans had to buy out the status.

Instead, he planned on using his swordsmanship abilities to become a recognized member among the Swordies. Nevertheless, if it was only exceptional swordsmanship, it would be impossible for him to be conferred the emblematic symbol of Swordie status, an engraved Dagger. The Emblem Management Institution, which was responsible for issuing these daggers, imposed the prerequisite of graduating from a Swordie school.

Of course, in order to live his days in peace after graduation, he had to diligently participate in the battle royal. If he were to attain a respectable grade, he would be very pleased.

Earning Swordie status and having a stable and comfortable lifestyle, that was all Kurou wished for.

"Kuro."

"……Hmm?"

He saw Hinako rushing over right in front of him. He had pondered whether or not she would stay home, but it looked like she had come to spectate. Although she was a human, it felt as if she had already assimilated into the Sword Academy.

"Haa, haa, I'm exhausted……I'm terrible at running……"

Hinako stopped right in front of Kurou, panting as she tried to catch her breath.

Today Hinako was wearing a cheerleader outfit. That ripe yellow sleeveless shirt was paired with a revealing miniskirt. Not that it was bothering him, but her panties could be seen while wearing this sort of thing. However, did Hinako know?

"……Although it doesn't matter to me, why are you wearing this outfit?"

"This seemed to be the appropriate attire for cheering people on, so I thought it would be perfect."

Hinako unwittingly lightly wiggled her miniskirt as she spoke. After Kurou took a quick glance at those sensuous legs, he once again thought about the contents within that miniskirt.

"You're right, but even if you didn't specifically wear these clothes, you can still……"

"Nevermind that, Kuro went too far by heading out in advance. Are you already tired of me?"

"Stop mentioning these unpleasant things. It's not like that. I called out to you when I was about to leave but weren't you busy with something? Plus I'd be screwed if I was late."

"Lately I've been getting the feeling that Kuro is sort of tossing me aside."

"About that……"

Kurou began to explain to Hinako.

After conversing with Sylphy, the deputy sent out a formal notice.

It said to discontinue the job of protecting Sakurai Hinako. Furthermore, he was to allow Hinako the freedom to move about within the Sword Academy.

It would be bothersome guarding her if she ran all over the place, but after the incident involving Manaka, the level of security for the school's defense system increased. The reasons for Kurou to be closely guarding her could be said to have lessened.

None of that was bad news to Kurou though.

Sakurai Hinako had been locked up in a room ever since she was a child. Until she was fifteen years-old, she had never witnessed the outside world.

Kurou felt that having Hinako freely move around within the Sword Academy's domain would be a good influence for her.

In addition, if Kurou were to always tightly guard her, it might become unbearable. No matter who it was, there must always be some time for privacy.

Hinako recently seemed————to possess only a sliver of common sense. Kurou believed that if possible, he should make the effort to not interfere with her freedom.

"I now understand why you have been setting me aside. However Kuro, I have a question."

"Just like old times, saying whatever comes to mind. What is it?"

"What's a battle royal?"

"……Hmm."

That's right, because of Hinako's caged up lifestyle, her knowledge was extremely limited. She would surprisingly not know about certain matters that were common knowledge.

"In short, it's not a one versus one, rather it is numerous people battling at once. This time it will be all first year students, with approximately 200 total. Everyone will simultaneously fight. Those who lose will be out of the fight and it will continue till the last person standing."

"I see……in that case, wouldn't people target the strongest individuals from the start?"

"That's the usual convention."

"Kuro will probably receive the brunt of the attacks. Regardless if it is Kuro being the Sword Saint's disciple or being able to repel Manaka, everyone should know that by now. May luck be on your side."

"Don't pray for me!"

Since Hinako was stoic as always, it was hard to tell whether she was serious or just kidding around.

It was just as she said, the chances of Kurou being sought after was pretty high.

The thought of losing to a human like Kurou would be very shameful. As a result, the number of people to retreat from and cross swords with will probably be numerous. However, the battle royal was practically a festive event————a game rather.

If it was a game, then losing to a human could be excused by just saying “because it was a game, I only did him a favor” by many individuals. That would not be shocking at all.

“Specifically, what are the rules of engagement?”

“After this, everyone has to go to their designated spot . Once we all disperse to our location, then it begins. Whether you run around or stay in one spot, it’s fine either way.”

“So basically there won’t be spectators like there were during the elimination matches. If no one else will witness this, then I get feeling that the number of people who will challenge Kurou will increase immensely.”

“Exactly.”

From the area of the Sword Academy, the 200 students will probably be spread out in a somewhat large scope of space. Who will lose to who, it would be hard to discern from those outside the battle.

“The students will have these number tags attached to their chest.”

Kurou retrieved a round number 96 golden sign from a bag and attached it to his chest.

"To take down another student, you just have to get them to surrender and take their number tag from them. However, if their tag breaks, then that student loses his right to participate. So it seems it's alright to directly cut their tag as well."

"I see."

Hinako gently nodded.

"In other words, in pretending you are taking their tags, you can freely grab their breasts."

"Ah, Hinako understands as well."

"What the heck are you teaching her."

"Hey deputy."

At some point, deputy Sabina's figure appeared alongside Kurou and Hinako.

"What do you mean 'hey'? Are you belittling your assignment?"

"No, it isn't like that……"

Hinako learned some excessive matters from Kurou. However, Kurou swore an oath to not lay a finger on Hinako. Being fifteen years-old and living independently , Kurou also had to pay the school's tuition fee. If he were to engage in some brazen encroachment, he would be expelled and be unable to attain Swordie status. In order to avoid that kind of outcome, he had to go against his desires and put reason first.

"Sakurai Hinako is under your protection, you need to make sure she wears proper clothing."

"That was the problem!?"

Kurou disrespectfully chided the usually stern deputy.

"I didn't do anything. In regards to exercising restraint , even I know that."

"Really? Well, if you can't contain yourself then just let me know. If it's just the chest, then I can let you rub mine ."

"Eh, really!?"

Up till now, his relationship with the deputy had not been really close————Rather, they practically never conversed before and he never knew that she could be so straightforward.

"No problem. Even a human girl wouldn't be flustered from being licked on the cheeks by her own dog."

"……I suppose."

Even if at first glance she seemed pretty frank, the deputy was still a Swordie, an existence that scorned humans like Kurou. Conversing only because he was her subordinate, that was all he should expect.

"Speaking of which, what are you doing here deputy?"

"Sending Sylphy-sama her periodic report."

The deputy pointed in the direction of the tent. Sylphy was currently sitting on a steel chair and enthusiastically conversing with Sefi. Sylphy seemed to have come to spectate.

"Sylphy-sama doesn't want a written report and wishes to listen to it instead, hence I came."

"As expected of Sylphy-sama……"

The eventual successor of the four generals was currently assiduously going about her work. Even if it seemed that she was already a well-known, capable government official, she would be able to serve the people to an even greater extent if she were to attain the pinnacle role.

"Oh right, Lars is also nearing the end of his hospital stay."

"Eh, that's surprisingly early."

Lars was a fellow tutee alongside Kurou as well as his partner from the Sabers.

A Swordie's recovery abilities far outmatch that of a human. As a result, the underlying reason behind Lars's recuperation time was very simple. Based on the grave wound he received during his battle versus Manaka, even death would not have been shocking.

"Lars will most likely continue to go to school here. You two better not cause trouble here since the daughter of an important figure will be present."

"Understood."

After Kurou nodded, the deputy walked off towards the tent. Her weariness was reflected in her footsteps. Being suddenly forced to take over the role of the director, even a Swordie like her appeared to be showing signs of exhaustion.

"Speaking of which Kuro……"

"What is it?"

"What are you going to do about the clothing issue?"

That conversation just now, Hinako appeared to be not paying attention, however it turned out she was.

"……About that, when the time comes I'll let you know."

"Nonsense, then how about I ask Sefi?"

"Don't do it!"

Sefi would probably misunderstand the situation. Kurou was not a masochist, so he wished to avoid getting beat and scolded.

At this time, a large batch of numbers were broadcasted, Kurou's number included. It appeared that they were to head towards their designated spots.

"Well, I'll be back shortly."

"Wait, hold on. Take this."

Hinako handed him a small package.

"This is char siu rice. Please eat this if you get hungry."

"So this was what you were doing back at the house, thanks."

Apparently he was not a stickler for char siu rice. However, who knows how long it will take for this to end. Therefore, he rejoiced having something that would ensure he could replenish his energy.

"Kuro, goodluck——"

For the first time, Hinako said something that resembled a cheerleader. However, cheering him on stoically while blankly standing there did not make it much more enthusiastic.

Kurou wryly smiled. He then waved his hand and headed off.

The sharp broadcast reverberated throughout the campus.

As scheduled, the curtains for the battle royal were raised at 10am.

Kurou also heard the broadcast. His assigned starting location was near a conspicuous fir tree located in the forest where he lived.

The moment the broadcast sounded, Kurou left the fir tree that was adjacent to him and started sprinting through the forest.

Although the battle royal had just started, he did not wish to instigate any trouble. When the sounds of wildlife vanished, there was nothing but silence.

However, the students participating in the battle royal all braced themselves. They were all probably acutely sensing the breathing and footsteps of the other two hundred students on the move. Undoubtedly, the students were keyed in on various sounds. Of course, Kurou was no different.

The rules for the battle royal were simple. In short, cutting apart the opponent's tag was all that was needed. Even staying at one's starting location and not moving at all was acceptable.

Kurou was inferior to the Swordies when it came to physical capabilities. In order to avoid expending his energy, staying in one place was a viable option. However, he was resolute in heading out.

In regards to a battle royal and such, Kurou had never experienced anything like it. What is in store, how will it turn out, he had no clue at all. Nevertheless, he felt that if he could knock out any students he saw, then everything would be smooth sailing. As opposed to staying at his

original location, moving around was the only way for him to dispel any overthinking.

"Well, it'll work out in the end."

Kurou was not under the impression that it was ok to lose. However, the battle royal had no impact on grades and was merely a game. Based on the rules, the strongest might not even prevail.

After traversing the forest, he entered the courtyard. The sound of wooden swords clashing came from a certain direction. It appeared there were people who had already started much earlier.

I suppose I'll spectate the match a bit, just as he was thinking along those lines……

"Kurou!"

"……Hmm?"

A girl came running to him from afar.

"……You——are……"

"I'm Lima! Did you already forget!?"

"Ah, I see."

She had short hair and was very energetic.

She was part of Sefi's entourage————one of her friends who nagged about Kurou before.

"Have your wounds healed already?"

"That wound had already healed long ago."

Lima's shoulder was injured by a rifle during the first day of the elimination matches when the Sun Cultists invaded the school. After that, she likely stayed at the hospital.

"A gunshot wound healed that fast? I do not wish to battle against someone who is hurt."

"I said it has already healed. See, right here!"

Lima removed her shirt and pulled on her blouse to reveal her shoulder. Although a small remnant of the bullet marking remained on her fair, white flesh, the wound indeed appeared to have completely healed already.

"What a feast for the eyes. Thank you very much for going through all that trouble just so I can have a look."

"……Huh? Q-Quit scheming!"

Lima's face turned red as she put her clothes back on. Although her breasts were completely exposed to him as a result, it seemed that she was unaware that things would end up like that.

"Well, it's great that the wound has healed. As to be expected of a Swordie."

A Swordie's recovery abilities far surpassed that of a human's. It was the same for Lima who was wounded by a powerful .30 caliber rifle. Her injury had essentially vanished after two weeks. It was said that it was the same during the Great War when the Swordies were attacked. As long as a Swordie survived, they could instantly return to the front lines. For the humans, that would probably be intolerable.

"W-Whatever, I'm fine. Hurry up and let's go."

"You're so impatient. You seem to really want to get it on with me."

Lima centered her wooden sword while Kurou displayed the same stance.

"And besides, I still owe you a favor. So of course I have to do something about it."

"Eh……"

Indeed, Kurou was the one who repelled the people that assaulted Lima. However, for her favor, it was to knockout Kurou rather than just expressing gratitude. To humans, this was absolutely baffling.

"By the way, have you heard about Neena?"

"I heard. There's a lot of things I wish I could say to her."

Kurou was certain that would be the case. Neena was Sefi's friend and Lima's friend as well. However, she was a Blaze who used a fraudulent personal record to infiltrate the academy. Plus, her goal was to murder Sefi.

"Betrayal is betrayal, that I don't care about. However, disappearing without leaving a word is impermissible. The least she could have done was mention something to us before taking off."

Exactly, a Swordie's reasoning was difficult to comprehend, but perhaps Lima was just an oddball.

"Those matters can be saved for later. For now, you're the main focus."

"What, you're still going to be like that?"

There was no telling how many people he would have to battle in the end. Furthermore, just nonchalantly conversing would not suffice either.

"Prepare yourself!"

As soon as Lima shouted, she stormed off in his direction.

While planting her foot heavily against the ground, her wooden sword slashed across at light speed. Her agility and the speed of her sword in that attack were hard to capture for the eyes of a human————however ……

Kurou was not an ordinary human. He had received training from the Sword Saint and lived to tell the tale after crossing swords against the strongest of the Seven Swords.

Although Lima was also very talented, she was still just an immature first-year swordsman. Her powerful swing just whiffed by Kurou————

"……!"

Lima uttered a quiet yelp. While Kurou was dodging, he swung his wooden sword across, hitting Lima on the side of her head.

For a human, it would not be surprising if they were to die from a strike like that. However, the wooden sword could not possibly deal a life threatening wound to the light powered body of a Swordie.

"Kurou……!"

Lima eyed Kurou as she helplessly fell over. Despite it not becoming a life threatening wound, a powerful jolt to the head would render even a Swordie unable to stand back up.

"Sorry."

Kurou stated as such towards the fallen Lima, who was faced up towards the sky. He used the point of his wooden sword to sever the tag on her chest.

One down.

Regardless, Lima will likely awaken soon and the staff will probably rush over to check in on her.

"Up next……"

Kurou mulled over where to go, but just as he was heading back……

"……Eh?"

Surrounding Kurou was a couple————rather, dozens of other female students.

Each held up their wooden sword while emitting their killing intent towards Kurou.

"I must be quite well received around here."

Kurou wryly smiled as he positioned his wooden sword.

They wanted to take out the strongest members first. Perhaps they were going to attack Kurou en masse.

Regardless, this would probably be challenging for him to escape from.

Well, it saved him the trouble of contemplating where to go next————while thinking as such, he revealed a slight smile.

Kurou sprinted into the school's backyard and sat down with his back against the school walls.

The courtyard was adorned with a plain flower garden and a few trees. There was a sense of stillness since there also appeared to be a garbage dump here as well. The place was devoid of the aura of anyone else and seemed like a place where he could rest a bit.

His breathing was erratic and the shirt to his uniform felt heavy due to being soaked with sweat.

It had not even been one hour since the battle royal started.

However, he probably had already taken out thirty people.

Swordies despised a one versus many battle and a proper swordsman would practically never perform any surprise attacks or attacks from behind. Although it was a different matter when it came to war or his Sabers missions, such underhanded methods would not be used otherwise.

Truthfully speaking, Kurou had never encountered a time where he had been swarmed by a large group of people thanks to the Swordies' idiotic habits.

However, because he had to go through thirty one versus one battles, his weariness would of course accumulate. If he were to stay in one place he would be facing one battle after another, hence it was necessary for him to be on the move.

Kurou, whose physical capabilities were twelve out of ten for a human, was still somewhat lacking in stamina after staying in the hospital for two weeks.

He retrieved the rice balls that Hinako made for him from his shirt pocket and wolfed them down. Who knows how many more times he would have to battle.

When contemplating over his level of exhaustion, it was probably best for him to bide his time.

"……Hmm?"

There was another student running towards the backyard like Kurou did.

The person's breathing was even more spastic than Kurou's was. The person was indeed a boy.

"Tough work out there——"

Although Kurou calmly greeted him, the other guy gave no response. He was also a Swordie. Was that a look of disdain directed at Kurou? Or was he fatigued to the point where he was unable to spare a greeting?

Even if it was within the Sword Academy, there were still a couple male students. However, most of them did not rely on their swordsmanship ability, rather it was their exceptional family history that facilitated their enrollment to the school. This student was likely one of those types.

The guy jogged right past Kurou and disappeared as he headed towards the opposite side of the building. He must have wanted to rest a bit for him to swing by here.

Perhaps he got into some trouble as well? Kurou wryly smiled at the thought.

“Guh!”

A sudden cry was heard. The boy from not too long ago tumbled across the ground. He was completely knocked into a daze and the tag on his chest was already in tatters.

Kurou directed his gaze upwards from the boy and prepared his stance.

This time it was a girl that slowly came into view.

"……?"

Kurou tilted his head slightly.

The girl that appeared was wearing the same uniform and holding the same wooden sword as the other contestants, but why was she wearing a mask around her eyes? It honestly seemed quite suspicious.

"……What's with the mask? Did the theme change?"

"……"

The girl remained silent towards Kurou's joke.

The masked girl approached Kurou————and then instantly closed the distance as she swung her sword.

"……"

That precise strike was barely avoided by Kurou when he saw the sword's tip.

The masked girl pressed on, unleashing attacks one after another. Each strike was carefully and exquisitely measured. Although he dodged them, the power exuded in those attacks numbed his skin.

However, Kurou saw through the whole thing while most humans would most certainly be unable to even capture the afterimage of the attack.

As for the masked girl, she was not surprised by the fact that a human evaded her strike. She swiftly charged forth and put everything she had into aiming for a fatal thrust.

“Eh?”

Suddenly, Kurou stopped in his tracks. He was unwittingly close to the flower garden. By the garden was a fence————in which his foot bumped into the short twenty centimeter fence.

“Huh!?”

That particularly sharp blow brushed the side of Kurou’s face.

Even though he suddenly halted his footsteps, Kurou leaned back as he once again barely dodged the attack.

“That’s quite dangerous.”

Kurou left the flower garden while maintaining his distance from the masked girl.

He felt a faint sense of heat on his face. After rubbing his hand against it, he noticed there was bright red blood.

Despite intending to avoid the strike, the wooden sword appeared to have slightly grazed him.

“Having been grazed along the face, my girl will surely cry.”

“……”

The masked girl once again went without any reactions towards Kurou’s joke.

“Ignoring me? Well, whatever, I did do something a bit cruddy to you as well.”

“……?”

Although the masked girl revealed her suspicions based on the movements of her lips, Kurou offered no reply.

Kurou did not respond. Instead, he closed the distance between them.

The masked girl was flustered only for a moment as she reset her stance.

Kurou continued to push on brazenly————

"……!"

At the moment when Kurou rushed by the masked girl 's body, his sword flashed by, sending the girl down on her knees.

"What just happened……?"

"Ah, so you finally decide to talk."

Kurou excitedly spoke as the mask gently peeled off and fell to the ground. It must have fallen due to Kurou striking her head region.

"What a beauty. It's a shame you had to wear a mask."

Kurou surveyed her while speaking. However, he had not seen her before.

Her face revealed her complete astonishment. Did she really think that Kurou was not planning on doing anything as he charged past her?

"How could I lose to the sword of a human……"

"Have you been listening to what I'm saying? My sword is a tad out of the ordinary."

Regardless if it was a Swordie or a human, it was possible to predict the path and speed of an opponent's sword based on their hand movements. Especially for Swordies, a human's sword could have its start to finish, the strength of swing and such determined in an instant.

Nevertheless, Kurou's sword was different.

His sword was able to depict a different path and speed from his opponent's predictions. For those who cross swords with Kurou, their timing would be disrupted by his unpredictable sword, resulting in a loss to a simple attack.

"At least, this isn't just the sword of any ordinary human. Even if you lose it's nothing to be surprised about."

"……What was the bad thing that you mentioned before?"

"It's just that I slightly underestimated you. To have my foot get caught in the fencing, that was too careless even for me. There's no way I would have room for such carelessness for an opponent as strong as you."

Indeed, the masked girl could not even be compared to the thirty students he eliminated earlier today. She was not an opponent where he could just ready his stance for an instant win against.

"Really……well whatever, it was at least a unique experience for me."

After the girl that had lost her mask unsteadily stood back up, she removed the tag on her chest and tore it apart. It seemed to be a forfeiting indication.

Once she threw away her tag, she simply left.

"……What the, she is……"

"A second year student."

"Hmm?"

Kurou turned around. In that direction————it was Sefi.

While holding the wooden sword in her right hand, she slowly approached Kurou.

"Were you not paying attention? The color of her tie was green."

"Haha, I didn't notice……my only impression was that her breasts were huge."

"That's not anything attention worthy!"

"No problem, Sefi's are still larger compared to hers."

"Keep that to yourself!"

Sefi replied in a growling manner. Just like always, she could never take a joke.

"By the way, why are there second year students? Only first-years can participate in this battle royal right?"

"I get the feeling that there's quite a few upperclassmen participating, not just second-years. I've also seen third-year students and took out three of them.

"I see……"

The battle royal was an entertainment activity. It was not meant to be used for ranking the first-year students. Although, it would not be out of the ordinary to see surprise activities planned for the upperclassmen. That second year student must have worn that ridiculous mask while participating in the activity since she thought it would be funny.

"However, Kurou beating that girl was much more impressive. The abilities of these participants range all over the place."

"If there are many more individuals of the same caliber as the one I faced, then all the first-years probably have no chance of winning."

Or perhaps the upperclassmen would conveniently pull out after battling a couple rounds. In the end, the battle royal was an activity conducted for first-year students.

"Regardless, the number of people has dropped drastically. How many did you take out Rou?"

"In a certain sense, I'm really quite a popular around here."

Based on Sefi's inquiry, she must have also eliminated a lot of people.

The end of the battle royal appeared to be surprisingly fast approaching.

"Speaking of which, Sefi……"

"Yes?"

"Why is your face all red?"

Kurou noticed it from the start. The moment Sefi appeared, even her ears were flushed red and her eyes were a tad moist.

"T-That's because it feels quite hot from battling so many times!"

"But it seems there's not a drop of sweat on you……"

"Shut up! Enough, let's just start already!"

Sefi shouted as she displayed a stance with her wooden sword held up.

Although she was an impatient person, Kurou pretty much understood why Sefi's face was thoroughly red.

Swordies and humans were largely similar, except when it came to physical capabilities and a a few other aspects.

One of which was————the Swordies were a sword loving race.

The desire for a strong swordsman was a Swordie instinct. Being drawn in by a strong individual, they were basically captivated. For Swordie girls going through puberty, this was especially true. It was said that they were particularly prone to being captivated.

Sefi fit the criteria perfectly.

She must have witnessed the battle between Kurou and the mask wearing second year student and got hooked on Kurou's swordsmanship. There was an instance of that before.

However, was this “love” real, or was it a temporary infatuation? Kurou probably feared it was the latter.

“I’m coming!”

Sefi rapidly charged in and swung her sword down.

With that wind ruffling clash, the wooden sword sent a ferocious gale that passed by Kurou’s sides.

“……!”

Brushing past his skin, Kurou sensed the pressure of an even stronger sword compared to that second year student.

Sefi’s sword was not reliant on tricks, rather she was someone who would unleash everything in one strike. Forget humans, even some Swordies were probably unable to contain Sefi’s all-out attack.

The Starbreaker————Sefi possessed the brawns to be able to effortlessly swing around that sword which resembled a chunk of steel. Although it was a wooden sword, wielding it at full strength would probably shred a person’s body apart.

"Not good, so dangerous, oh so dangerous."

Kurou instantly separated from Sefi as he spoke in jest.

However, Sefi offered no response towards Kurou's joke. This time she slashed horizontally, but Kurou simply just slightly stepped back to avoid that air splicing sword.

During that evasion, Kurou was sure of it.

It was back when he returned from the hospital and saw Sefi swinging her Sword.

After the portal opened while battling against Manaka, a type of change occurred within Sefi.

Kurou was able to make sense of these two moments.

Following that————Sefi's third strike once again aimed at the upper body.

"……?"

Kurou prepared his stance. He used his own wooden sword to repel Sefi's crushing attack and sidestepped from the path of her sword.

Despite her body on the brink of collapse, Sefi was still able to withdraw the wooden sword and reset her stance.

“My sword……was blocked?”

Sefi’s face clearly surfaced an expression of shock.

She was very familiar with Kurou’s sword, the so-called Olden Style. Precisely because of this, she felt astonished.

Kurou’s father was a Swordie researcher. He investigated the Swordies who appeared on earth one after another through tiny portals since ancient times as well as the samurai who fought against them. He secretly composed his findings.

The findings were not for the sake of defeating the Swordies, rather it was simply a scientific interest.

Although Kurou was just a child when his father lost his life, the result of his findings were passed down through him.

After his dad died, the Sword Saint, who took in Kurou as her disciple, used the result of his dad's research to teach him the technique to battle against the Swordies————the Olden Style.

The foundation of the Olden Style started with evading the sword of a Swordie which could even sever steel.

For humans whose vision capturing and reaction speed cannot overcome a Swordie's swing of the sword, they were forced to read the path of the sword in order to dodge. It was essential that they mastered this future prediction-esque skill.

Ever since he was young, Kurou was constantly faced with the attacks of the Sword Saint's sword. With that, he was now able to forego sword to sword combat and just use his body to dodge normal swordsmen using his sword prediction.

"You've become strong Sefi. If I were to carelessly evade, there'd be no way I could completely dodge your sword."

"Me……?"

Against truly powerful opponents, Kurou had the option of dodging the enemy's sword. If he was unable to, he would use his sword to repel his opponent's sword and then dodge. Of course, if he contacts a Swordie's sword, Kurou's arm would probably break along with his sword. For him, it was not about having a greater sword momentum in comparison to his opponent, rather it was utilizing his opponent's force against them to parry their sword.

If Kurou's sword clashed against the sword of his opponent, it meant that his opponent could not be dealt with through his usual means.

"Maturing within such a short time frame……If only your body development could quickly reach maturity, that'd make me even more excited."

"Quit adding in all this nonsense!"

"Of course, I feel that Sefi's breasts are quite adequate as it is."

"Just shut up! Enough of this breast talk!"

Sefi yelled as such.

"Tch, I'm clearly praising you. Well, there's no way I'd be mistaken about your strength increase."

"……I saw your two battles against Neena, and the battle between you and Manaka. During Rou's stay at the hospital, I continuously contemplated over what methods would defeat you."

"Normally speaking, one does not become stronger just by spectating. It's probably just your raw talent. Furthermore……have you noticed it yourself?"

In the midst of the battle against Manaka, a portal opened————after that, Sefi's light received an explosive increase. Although she did not instantly notice the impact, the change was already as clear as day. It would be strange if she had not realized that was the case during Kurou's stay at the hospital.

The greater the amount of light within a Swordie, the greater their strength and speed will be. Sefi's physical capabilities are likely to be sharply different from before.

"Light, it is something that increases with a long duration of training. So how come it changed so suddenly, do you know?"

"No……I don't understand. Although, something certainly did take place back then."

As expected, Sefi also seemed to have detected some connection between her and the portal.

However, she appeared to be in the same boat as Kurou in not knowing its cause. It was just like Sylphy stated before, the portals were teeming with mysteries.

"Well, what we don't know doesn't really matter. Right now the most pressing matter is……my battle against you."

"It always turns out like this."

As Kurou wryly smiled, Sefi once again swung her sword.

So forceful, yet its speed surpassed what the eyes could capture. After using the Olden Style to parry her sword, he backed off.

She truly became stronger————

If Kurou were to make one mistake, his body would be shattered by her wooden sword in the exchange. He

chuckled as he realized that the opponent he had been fighting against since they were both just children had been slowly catching up to him. He was overjoyed about it.

Once the exceptionally powerful sword was deflected, Sefi stopped in her tracks.

"It seems that Kurou is quite strong as usual……tch."

"Don't click your tongue! Well, there are still inadequacies to you."

"Inadequacies……"

"It's simple really, it's your lack of real battle experience."

Sefi never had a designated teacher.

Within her residence of the four generals, there came and went many powerful and talented swordsmen. It would appear that battling against them was Sefi's daily routine.

However, in the end it was just practice. The swordsmen who faced Sefi, the four generals' daughter, would probably never display their true abilities.

"Sefi has never experienced a fight where lives were at stake. Do you think that the attack from Neena counts? Of course not. One can't get stronger if they don't know the value of life."

"Then……what about you?"

"I used to train with my master in the mountains. It wasn't just living the mountain lifestyle either. Since the amount of guests was more than expected, there were many idiots who wanted to challenge my master to determine a victor."

If they wanted to fight against the Sword Saint, they first had to overcome her disciple————who knows how many times that occurred. Needless to say, those were all genuine sword battles where both lives were on the line. The Sword Saint would watch the opponent who came to battle and would only send the ones that her disciple had a chance to defeat for him to fight

against. From that, there were practically no opportunities for the Sword Saint to be matched against an opponent.

"Swordies, humans, both are only able to become stronger through life and death battles."

"I see…….I haven't killed anyone before."

In other words, if Sefi were to accumulate experience in battling to kill, she would certainly become stronger. For Swordies, as long as it was swordsman versus swordsman, taking away one's life was not taboo.

"I'm grateful that you have explained these things to me. That said, there's something I've wanted to ask you. May I?"

"Go ahead."

"I can very clearly discern that you are powerful. Indeed, I seem to have become stronger. However, that second year student just now was also a difficult opponent. Even so, it's hard to believe that Kurou would take a wound to the face from her sword. Furthermore, I get the feeling your movements have become a tad sluggish."

"……Eh."

He never imagined that it would be noticed. Kurou was stunned.

After leaving the hospital, he noticed it as well while he was swinging a sword. He felt that his sword techniques lagged in both speed and force. In addition, his agility was not the same as before. Except, even if he was sluggish, it was only to a tiny extent. To be able to see through that bit was truly quite exceptional.

"Is it because of your injuries? Even though Manaka was a traitor, her abilities earned her the title of one of the Seven Swords. For a human to be slashed by Manaka like that and only spend two weeks recovering is quite unthinkable."

"Sefi, there's two things wrong with your statement."

Kurou cut Sefi short and proceeded to speak in a elucidating manner.

"First, my wound is really already healed. If the wound was vulnerable to tearing, then I wouldn't have been allowed to leave the hospital."

"I suppose so……."

"And I have already explained to you about the light body right?"

Humans did not possess the powerful source of physical power known as light, that was common sense.

However, when facing the powerful light of the Seven Swords, humans would probably crumble and their bodies would incessantly shake. Hence, humans also recognized the presence of light.

If humans could retain light, then they should be able to unleash it————only Hyouka would deliberate over something as silly as that.

"My master possessed light power that went beyond Manaka, to heights unimaginable. Furthermore, she was able to expertly control her light. She must have detected that there was a miniscule amount of light within humans as well. Anyhow, I also realized the light within me was enough to be used. That's great and all, but humans seem to be unable to bear light energy."

Kurou was unable to control the light and that was why the light poured over his entire body.

However, the light wrapped around his entire body, resulting in his body being reinforced. Despite it not being on the same level as a Swordie, it allowed him to surpass his strength and speed for battle. This was known as the light body.

"While the light body is activated, all wounds will quickly heal. Thanks to this, the shoulder wound had healed long ago. However, there was a side effect on my body————basically, my body movement was temporarily disabled afterwards."

"I see……but, are you sure you're fine!? If that's the case, isn't that an unanticipated weakness of yours!? Are you ok with telling me something like that!?"

"Indeed……if I'm attacked by Sefi after I'm weakened through the use of the light body, my purity will be instantly taken by you."

"Why would I do that!?"

It was hard to say but he would probably still wish for it to be taken away anyways. However, Sefi, who was prone to embarrassment, probably would not grant his wish.

"All in all, I understand, you're not in your best condition. For you to say that I've gotten stronger under these circumstances————"

"That would be your second mistake."

Kurou extended out his pointer finger and middle finger as he spoke.

"Right now because of the influence of the light body, my movements have become sluggish. That's true and all but……I'm clearly able to battle and still had the free time to come to the battlefield."

While wryly smiling, Kurou repositioned his wooden sword.

Battling when one has a winning chance——that would be the norm during combat. He had battled against Manaka of the Seven Swords before, but that extremely reckless situation was an exception.

Kurou believed that every battle was a winnable battle .

That was also a notion his master, Sword Saint Hyouka, instilled in him.

"Ah……haha, I see, I see. Looks like I'm clearly wrong."

Sefi's face was flushed red as she incessantly nodded her head. Although Kurou originally wanted to instill a slight amount of killing intent to his smile, in terms of the forcefulness of adding such a meaning, Kurou was no match for Sefi.

"T-Then I guess I won't be holding anything back. Fufufu!"

Sefi unleashed an odd laughter as she once resumed swinging her sword. Compared to before, this was a more extreme and intense attack.

From the looks of it, Sefi was probably more excited than afraid towards Kurou's intimidating smile.

Jeez, Swordies are so hard to understand. Kurou dodged and parried Sefi's ferocious jabs while in astonishment. He maintained his distance while backing off at the same time.

The two of them were engaged in battle, traversing across the backyard as they made their way to the parking lot. For a school, the large parking lot was rather large and could probably hold up to fifty vehicles. Their numbers were sparse, perhaps due to everyone wanting to avoid any damages today.

"What are you doing Kurou! If you don't counterattack, even a person like you will lose! Alright, hurry and give me everything you got! Hurry! Hurry! Hurry!"

It appeared that Sefi's excitement levels had substantially increased.

The sword-loving race, with such an instinct unleashed, her character would certainly somewhat change.

It was not as if Kurou could not counterattack. However, his curiosity was piqued upon seeing the state of Sefi's sword.

Sefi truly became stronger and was able to control that rapid upgrade in strength and speed quite exceptionally. Her swordsmanship also improved and any negligence

on his part would likely lead to him being eliminated in one hit.

Sefi's acute swordsmanship could be felt within each of her strikes. From the start, Sefi was always very talented. Precisely because she had not matured yet, she still had great potential for development. To be able to witness the maturity of a swordsman, it was quite valuable for Kurou.

"By the way Sefi."

"What is it!?"

Sefi kept moving her hands, continuing her frenzied attack as she spoke.

"When facing such a chaotic attack, I'm not going to have the leisure to kiss you right?"

"I'll be sure such a leisure gets smashed into pieces!"

Because of Kurou's frivolous speech, Sefi's swordsmanship was thrown slightly off.

In the past, Sefi had attacked Kurou because she became aroused from Kurou's sword. Furthermore, she

used a real sword that time. In order to not hurt Sefi and have her stop————Kurou kissed her, with such an attack making her return to her senses.

"I had clearly intended to forget about that matter…… don't bring up the past!"

Kurou calmly evaded Sefi's crazed swinging of the sword.

From the looks of it, Sefi was wavering excessively. The majority of her sword maneuvers were completely lacking in order.

It is about time that I put an end to this————after Kurou parried Sefi's wooden sword, Sefi jumped backwards. With Sefi's stance being compromised, one strike should be able to take her out right now.

Sefi was forced to prepare her wooden sword, but it was already too late. Just as Kurou was setting himself up to charge in————

".....!?"

Kurou was absolutely baffled.

"What was that just now……!"

"Eh?"

Sefi's eyes were also opened wide in surprise as she planned on swinging her sword downwards.

Kurou raised his brows, staring at his own wooden sword. The front part of his sword had already been fractured.

"What——what happened?"

Actually, Kurou had a general idea that something did happen. However, he did not know why such an event occurred.

Sefi was compelled to swing her sword downwards, but there was quite a stark difference in the timing of it. Although Kurou was able to brace the hit, grazing him or his sword should not have even been possible.

For a split second, he saw a black object suspended mid-air. It appeared to be a tiny————portal-like split that came only from the blade of Sefi's wooden sword as it severed Kurou's wooden sword.

In fact, that was all Kurou was able to discern. However————

"What's going on……!"

Kurou swung his fractured tip sword horizontally while in a perplexed state.

"Huh?"

An expression of bewilderment once again surfaced on Sefi's face————it appeared to be overly mundane in terms of the speed and path of the sword. In general, it was a very basic style of swordsmanship.

"Ha……!"

Nevertheless, in the very next moment that Kurou swung his blade in front of her, the tag hanging on Sefi's chest ripped into tatters.

"What!?"

Sefi uttered lightly and seemingly confirmed to herself that the tag was destroyed by placing her hand on her chest.

The result of the battle was————Kurou being the victor.

"What was that just now……"

"A neat little trick of the Olden Style called the Waning Crescent————in other words, it was faking a basic attack on the first offensive when the real attack was going to come in during the second offensive."

".....Then, isn't that just a feign?"

"Don't call it that."

Kurou chuckled a bit.

Such a technique would only be effective against those who were familiar with Kurou's unpredictable attacks. Precisely because he displayed a human-like strike, Sefi was stupefied and caught off guard. During that, he would then revert back to his usual aggression———— that was all there was to it. It would never work a second time so it really was just a little trick.

"Guh…...I lost, you won't be hearing any excuses from me."

It appeared that Sefi returned to her usual self. Despite her having calmed down, it probably happened because of her losing from being struck down by such a stodgy technique.

"However……"

Kurou had also taken somewhat of a blow. Just what was that inconceivable strike from Sefi……?

"What do you mean 'however'? That should be my line. As expected, I probably wasn't under my usual state of mind. Even so, your sword was severed by me."

".....Well, I suppose it doesn't matter since I won."

It seemed that Sefi still had not noticed what was behind that mystical strike. It was obviously an abnormality, but perhaps it was due to her excitement.

"You're right, there's no excuses as the loser of the battle. Here you go Rou."

"Haha, thanks."

After Kurou received the wooden sword, Sefi approached Kurou. She extended out her hand and lightly caressed the wound on Kurou's cheeks.

"Due to your flurried movements, that wound opened up again."

"It's not too bad. Don't be crying now Sefi."

"Your girl, so that was referring to me wasn't it!?"

Based on that, it seemed Sefi had definitely overheard the conversation between the second year student and Kurou.

".....Idiot, it's probably not even possible."

"Eh——what is?"

"Of course. It's obvious…...I can't even reach the soles of your feet. Alright, please wipe the blood off with this."

Once Sefi handed her handkerchief over, she swiftly left by herself.

"……Well, I see, based on Sefi's personality……"

Since she always loses to Kurou, she was probably reluctant to just leisurely get along with him.

Nevertheless, there was no way Sefi did not reach the soles of Kurou's feet in terms of strength. It would not be too far-fetched to say that she had nearly caught up to Kurou.

There was a discernible increase in power and that oddity from her sword, yet Sefi had a great amount of room to mature more. Certainly she will become very powerful.

"Ah――, hahaha, very amusing."

Kurou suddenly turned around.

There was a large four-wheeled vehicle and――――― sitting on the hood of the car was a girl clapping her hands.

She possessed light green hair and the slender figure of a model. To add to that, she wore the tie of a third year student.

That would be the student council president of the Sword Academy, Isyuto.

"Hello."

Following the more formal introduction from Isyuto, she slid down from the front hood of the car. Her dress fluttered gently in the breeze.

Isyuto's right hand was grasping a wooden sword and a tag with the number "0" written on it was attached to her chest.

".....So you're participating too."

"That's because the interaction between the third-years and the first-years is practically nonexistent. Furthermore , there's a lot of interesting kids within this year's crop of first-years. I would like to see them for myself."

"I see."

Although she had a reason, to see the student council president participating in a fun activity designed for first

year students was quite unexpected. However, Kurou was not in the least bit surprised. No matter what were to occur, he would not waver. That advantage comes from a person's accumulated practical experience.

"May I ask a question?"

Kurou calmly raised his hand.

"Sure, go ahead."

"As the student council president, are you the strongest out of the entire academy?"

"There's no such mandate for that. However, I am accustomed to the chief duties of the third-year student council president position."

It was an obvious answer. No matter what, this was the Sword Academy. To only be exceptional academically was not enough to reach the top.

"Ha…...to be suddenly facing the most powerful from the academy!?"

"What is it kid? You wouldn't happen to be scared are you?"

"What do you mean by 'kid'……"

The student council president should only be older than Kurou by two years. Perhaps Isyuto was the type who liked to portray herself as an older sister.

"Really, this needs to be more…...well, following the battle of the four great heavenly kings against the ferocious second-years and third-years, only then will I feel a sense of greatness."

"Are you sure you're not confusing this with a game?"

Isyuto shrugged her shoulders with a helpless expression.

"However, it's not a guarantee that I'm the strongest. Setting aside the third-years, even among the second-years there are some very capable individuals."

"If they were all to enter, then the battle royal may as well be over."

"The volunteer participants aren't necessarily among the strongest of their respective grades. That said, I used my authority as the student council president to decline

the entry of many misbehaving kids who wished to enter .”

“Declined?”

“Yeah, there are kids who don’t understand the severity of the situation. Sometimes it has forced me to act as the manager and lock up some students who are restricted from entering in a timeout room.”

The student council president would stop at nothing to have it her way, leaving Kurou a bit exasperated.

The so-called timeout room was not exactly peaceful either. He should be a bit more careful to avoid being placed there.

“If those tough kids all frenzied around here, the first-years would probably be defeated rather quickly. However, it seems that the only ones left are you and me. You and Sefi are ridiculously strong. Well, then again I’m just having a bit of fun myself.”

“Hmm.”

Although Sefi had also taken out a large number of people, to think there would only be two people left. Her

mentioning of “a bit” was probably just a modest gesture .

In other words, as long as Kurou was able to take out the student council president, he would end up as the victor.

“Well then, hurry up and show me what you got kid!”

“————!”

Suddenly, Isyuto sped off to close the distance between her and Kurou. Despite already being vigilant, he somehow let the enemy close in————Kurou was shaken as he used his wooden sword to deflect Isyuto’s downward strike. He did not even contemplate evading as he was only able to muster up a deflection.

“I wouldn’t have expected any less from you!”

As Isyuto shouted out, she continued her onslaught of the sword. A second and third strike came————her vicious attack was neverending. Her foot movements were all very sharp as she paced around forcefully on the surface.

It contrasted to Sefi's all-out attacks. In comparison to Manaka, her sword movements lagged behind greatly. Her swordsmanship also differed from the Sword Saint's flawlessness.

Even so, the force, speed, and swordsmanship behind Isyuto attacks————each aspect maintained such a balance.

The student council president Isyuto————gave the impression that she was no longer just a student, but rather an already matured swordsman.

"Gah!"

The strike that Kurou dodged knocked aside a car in the parking lot. The wooden swords were prone to breaking, yet a car was sent flying into the air, creating a massive cave-in within the car body. A thumping sound could be heard as the car landed back on the ground.

".....The light blade?"

Kurou quietly mentioned.

The sword raised up by Isyuto was shrouded in a faint white light.

Even among Swordies, only an exceptional Swordie individual could utilize their light so that it transfers to their blade. It was a technique that would increase the endurance and sharpness of their sword. However, this time it was with a wooden blade, so it being sharpened was probably not an issue.

"If I'm not allowed to go to this extent, then it seems I can't win versus you."

Isyuto revealed a brief smile as she pointed the tip of her sword of white light towards Kurou.

"Even though I've heard about you, it's still hard to believe. Clearly a human is unable to evade or parry away a Swordie's sword————a Sword Princess's sword at that."

"Sure seems possible."

Kurou smiled in response.

"Well, originally I thought that was the case——you are the sole Sword Princess of the academy."

"Haha, you knew? Indeed, I do have the Sword Princess status for now. However, I wish to have this status removed after seeing how easily my sword was defended by you."

"It's not that easy. Well, it's always like walking on thin ice."

Isyuto's sword was very powerful. However, she could never compare to the Sword Saint. To Kurou, who had been continuously practicing with the strongest swordsman as his opponent, Isyuto's attacks were nothing to extent of unbearable.

"Based on what I've seen, your blocking or evasion all came before I even moved. It's not even seeing through my swordsmanship, but rather something that occurs much earlier than that."

".....That would be correct."

Truthfully, he did not really intend on hiding it.

"For Swordies, they put everything into their sword with their swift and powerful swings. Despite it being their strength————it's also a curse for them."

"Curse……?"

"Starting from right before the swinging motion, a Swordie's sword already begins its takeoff. That's what I look for since you guys are unable to stop the attack in which you put your soul into at that point. As long as I recognize this point, I'll be able to dodge the strike afterwards."

In truth, it was not as simple as that.

If he was unable to completely evade it, the only other option would most likely be death.

Even when it came to parrying, if he was not able to hit the opponent's sword at the precise time and angle, it may result in a broken sword or perhaps his demise.

During battles against Swordies, every strike was truly a perilous walk on thin ice.

"A curse eh? I see, indeed it is like that. Our born to kill instinct————the will to kill might even be too

effective. What is akin to a life revolved around slaying others, absolutely nothing can be done about that disposition. “

“Finding a winning opportunity would be my ability ————the Olden Style.”

There was also another aspect.

His own sword maneuvers are done with the complete elimination of killing intent.

By depicting an exquisite path and speed of the sword, it was not just his unpredictability. By the time the opponent noticed, that sword driven by an unpredictable swordsmanship would already be coming their way. The combination of these techniques resulted in a sword that not even a Swordie could defend against.

Completely seeing through the opponent’s attack and preventing his own attack from being read, that was the swordsmanship of the Olden Style. Despite the simplicity , that future sight sort of perception and the acute sword maneuvers were necessary. For the sake of humans opposing Swordies, the creation of such an art exists.

Suddenly, Kurou raised his sword towards the middle in his usual stance.

No matter how much rigorous training his techniques go through, a human's physical capabilities can never match up to that of a Swordie's. If Kurou wished to attain victory, getting a quick decisive victory was of the utmost importance.

"I apologize Miss Student Council President, but it looks like you have lost."

That declaration of victory was copied from his master .

Isyuto also displayed the same middle stance as Kurou except her sword tip was slightly pointed forward and her body also leaned a tad forward. However, Kurou did not mind such matters.

Kurou maintained his stance and slowly closed the distance————

He put pressure on his lower abdomen as he swung the sword of the Olden Style downwards.

"……!"

Isyuto's face revealed an astonished expression. That static expression was commonly seen by Kurou as the response from Swordies who had witnessed his sword.

However————

The attack aimed at Isyuto's head instead grazed a sliver of her light green hair, resulting in only a few strands of hair being sent flying in the air.

"Guh……!"

And it did not stop there.

Isyuto's menacing, lightning fast stab suddenly came forth, striking Kurou right in the middle of his chest. He heard the thump against his chest from that hit.

Kurou was sent flying a few meters backwards and viciously crashed into a parked car.

"Ack…..guh……!"

Kurou kneeled down on the floor while covering the spot where had been hit on the chest with his hand. To

have all that happen and still been able to single-handedly hold on to his sword showed his capabilities as a swordsman.

The surrounding scenery was perpetually blurring. Despite being able to see up close and far away, his vision was turbulently shaking.

It was a wooden sword, but when being dealt an attack from a Swordie, it was already a miracle that he did not faint.

"How about that……"

Isyuto was stroking her own hair as she stated.

"Although it's just my hair, but it has truly been ages since I've been hit with a sword. You're pretty good kid."

"……I'm the one who was hit."

Kurou pressed on his chest as he stood up. His knees were incessantly wavering. Despite just joking around, he no longer had the leisure to be saying such things.

"You may as well openly accept those words of praise. Well, even though you are young, I still like a bit of cockiness."

Isyuto approached Kurou with impunity. Paying no mind as she grabbed Kurou's left shoulder, she rolled up his shirt sleeve.

On his left hand was the white metal bracelet with the Sword Saint's emblem carved in. Known as the successor 's marking, it was also proof that he was a candidate.

"You are pretty worthy of being the Sword Saint's successor considering how you are still alive from that previous attack."

"……Are you trying to kill me?"

Although it was a vague suspicion, it turned out to be true after all. Kurou felt quite frightened by this.

"With you as my opponent, if I don't take it to that level then it wouldn't really be a battle. Actually, that last jab was aimed at your tag, but because you twisted your

body it missed. Consequently, you were blown far away. However, most of that was probably from you leaping back as well right?"

"Still, I thought there might have been a huge hole in my body."

Precisely as Isyuto mentioned, it was to limit the extent of his injuries. If he did not do that, at the very least he would undoubtedly have ended up on a hospital bed.

"What did you do? How come I————couldn't see it ?"

Isyuto's sudden stab that he was unable to evade lacked any resemblance from Manaka's high-speed sword. Him not being able to avoid it was not because of her speed or heavy force, it was just————Kurou was unable to detect her killing intent.

"You spoke of a Swordie's curse and when you add my own curse to that, perhaps it weakens me quite a bit."

"What do you mean……"

While quivering from the pain of that sudden jab, he stared at Isyuto.

How was he suppressed to such an extent when the student council president was inferior to both the Sword Saint and Manaka? Kurou did not understand.

"However, you are much more interesting compared to me. From a spectator's point of view, your sword clearly moves so slow that it makes one want to doze off, yet during the confrontation……it turns out quite different than one would expect. When the sword will be swung, what kind of swordsmanship, both of which are incomprehensible. You're very unfathomable, truly so."

Isyuto jovially stated as she grabbed Kurou's lower jaw and lifted it up.

"I like you a lot, to the point where I would even eat you……"

"If it's just to the extent of nibbling……I don't have a problem with that!"

As he mentioned as such, Kurou's hand that was pressed against his chest began to move.

Although he was not using a sword, he still utilized the movements of the Olden Style————not letting the opposition know where it was going.

This time his hand was heading for————

"What……!?"

The smile on the student council president's face vanished. Clearly an expression of distress and shock surfaced in its place. Plus, there was more to it.

"W-Where do you think you're touching……!?"

Her face was flushed red. Kurou's hand ripped apart the student council president's tag and groped her breasts. Getting the victory while fulfilling his desires, this was totally abusing the Olden Style technique.

"And with that, I'm the victor……that said……"

"J-Just how long are you going to rub there……what is it!?"

Kurou disregarded her as he continued to feel up her chest.

"The student council president is very beautiful, however your chest region is quite barren."

"Haha……"

A smile once again surfaced on Isyuto's embarrassed and reddened face.

The student council president revealed a gentle smile as she forcefully waved around her wooden sword.

"Eh? I've already won the battle royal————"

Isyuto turned a deaf ear towards Kurou while violently swinging down the sword.

With a sense of regret, Kurou moved his hand away from Isyuto's chest, barely dodging the blade in the process.

Kurou very precisely predicted that last strike, but the killing intent imbued within the blade was quite frightening.

It seemed the lovely student council president was not the type who could be touched.

Kurou escaped like a fleeing rabbit as he recalled the feeling of those tiny breasts. In order to survive till the honoring ceremony, it appeared that Kurou must win in a second bout against the student council president————

"……What have they all been doing?"

A woman downed a can of beer in one go, wryly smiling as she spoke.

Her figure was sitting atop a cylindrical water tank on the roof of the Sword Academy's secondary campus building. She sat there in fascination while being surrounded by a clutter of beer cans.

She had bought a six-pack, but after the battle royal there was only one can leftover.

"That little runt's womanizing is quite sickening."

The woman who was chugging down the beer was Manaka.

Even though she was a Swordie, she was also a swordsman who attained a Seven Sword title, the Sword General.

She was already twenty-four years old, yet she only resembled a teenager. Due to the influence of a Swordie's light, they were able to delay their aging more than humans.

She possessed green eyes and that blue hair of hers rested on her shoulders. Her face was unblemished, her breasts were quite ample, and her arms and legs were long and slender. Regardless where she was, she would always stand out as a graceful beauty.

Despite being a member of the Blazes and forging a personal record to infiltrate Swordie society, she climbed all the way to a spot among the Seven Swords. As the former director of the Sabers, she also used to be Kurou's superior.

She betrayed Swordie society, yet today she was properly wearing her Sabers uniform. That was because she really fancied the uniform that she ordered.

"In the end, Kurou-kun won eh? That was quite plain and boring."

When Manaka heard about the battle royal being held, she came to spectate.

It was said that she was a monster whose high-speed movements could even cause afterimages to appear. Her visual acuity for capturing her prey during those high speeds was also quite superior. With her visual acuity, it was easy for her to see the students engaged in battle from the panoramic view atop the water tank on campus.

Even Kurou's battle against Isyuto was entirely witnessed by her.

"Well, I guess that's that then. Although, there's still plenty of time to kill."

Just as Manaka muttered to herself…...

Suddenly, a blade brushed the side of her beer can, slicing it apart. As the liquid contents spilled out, Manaka jumped up into the air.

"Hmm?"

In front of Manaka, who was leisurely mumbling, the water tank also turned into pieces. The fragmented water

tank spilled a large quantity of water, which flooded the entire rooftop instantly and poured down towards the schoolyard below.

On top of the already submerged rooftop, Manaka retrieved the sword by her waist.

The Dancer————crowned as her personalized sword, it was a single-edged longsword. The blade was very thin like paper.

"Haha, to have chopped up this massive water tank in one swing, looks like those sword maneuvers of yours are still as scary as usual."

Manaka boldly smiled as she gazed towards the girl that appeared on the roof.

However, the other person was not looking at Manaka.

No————that was because she had her eyes tightly shut and was unable to see anything.

"Long time no see, Absolute Sword Syunaku."

"Indeed, it's been a while, former Sword General Manaka."

Overall, Syunaku's voice contained a hint of excitement.

She was one of the Seven Swords.

Currently there were many within the Seven Swords who were very young. Syunaku was nineteen years of age. She ascended to the throne three years ago when she was just sixteen.

Her light brown hair was tied in three due to its length .

She was wearing the official attire of the Seven Swords , which was similar to that of the Sword Princess. A black toned shirt with golden stripes paired with a similar black dress that was very short in length. She did not wear a mantle like the twin Sword Princesses.

Although she conveniently carried a small dagger by her waist, Manaka knew that was just a prop.

"As expected of you Manaka. I clearly thought that I would have you cut into circular pieces just like that water tank over there."

"Who cares about that, slashing apart my beer can was a bit excessive. There was still beer left in that."

"Pardon my bad manners."

Syunaku quietly chuckled while gracefully displaying a gesture of courtesy.

She was raised by a prestigious family with a history of former Seven Swords and Sword Princesses. Although there were existences who were special cases in using the sword among Swordies, Syunaku's family history of the sword was even more notable.

"Well then, I must apologize. Allow me to attach the label of being easily wiped out onto a traitor such as yourself."

Syunaku swiftly crossed her hands in front of her chest .

She was wearing black colored leather gloves and even had metallic rings on each of her five fingers.

There were five threads that extended outwards. This object, known as the Wire Sword, slashed apart Manaka's all important beer can and the water tank.

Syunaku's wire sword could reach a couple meters out , slicing things apart like cutting tofu. Scary enough, the mysterious sword was also capable of long-range combat .

Manaka had witnessed the mysterious sword countless times and knew perfectly well of its frightening powers.

However——Manaka simply smiled.

"Hahaha, do you think the current me would care about disgrace and such? If things aren't to my heart's content, then I will become even more enraged. Speaking of which, as a Seven Sword, you still decided to be a security guard for the academy? How gloryless."

"It's because I want money."

Syunaku did not mind as she replied.

She was one of the Seven Swords who——became a swordsman for the money. Disregarding the dangerous tasks, rumor has it that as long as she was reasonably compensated, she would even willingly take up the role of a bodyguard for a bar. Although Manaka was not quite convinced, it seemed to be the truth.

"I was entrusted by Sylphy-sama. It appeared that there were going to be some important individuals coming to the academy, plus this job was also well-suited for me."

"Indeed, the other Seven Sword are quite fearsome. However, the only one who can cover a vast amount of territory is you."

"Yup, even if it can't be seen, I————can sense everything."

Syunaku, the Absolute Sword, kept her eyes closed due to losing her sight.

However, she was capable of sensing the situation anywhere within a two kilometer scope. It was not her visual acuity, but rather she judged based on the sounds and air vibrations to completely grasp the movements of

any person or being. In place of her lost vision, her other senses sharpened————and in addition, there was this unique skill that only she was capable of using. As for the specifics behind this, even Manaka was unsure.

"Furthermore, perhaps a swordsman of your stature might even be pursuing Sefi-sama and that girl from the Sun Cult. In that case, even if we assemble our people and gather the exceptionally talented Sword Princesses, it would only be at the expense of a slaughter. If it is me, there is a chance that the entire school's security work and the task of facing a Seven Sword can be taken care of ."

"I see. Well, even I was surprised to see you waiting for me here."

"I was quite astonished as well. Who would have thought that the person who went on a rampage here not too long ago would return without a second thought. To be drinking while spectating a student activity here much less."

Manaka confirmed that Syunaku's wire sword slightly moved a bit. Even though each strand was invisible to the naked eye, Manaka was able to capture them with her vision.

"The wounds my sister's rascal disciples dealt to me have already healed. It's been a while since I last went for a jog and I decided to conveniently stop by here along the way."

"Of course of course, in other words you were ' conveniently' killed during a jog. How sad…...ha!"

The moment Syunaku motioned her fingers, the wires covering the building suddenly all rose upwards.

The ten wires each resembled different living beings on the move. The wires more or less trapped Manaka in a cage-like manner————she was about to be sliced into ten pieces of flesh in one fell swoop.

"......Darn."

Syunaku quietly murmured.

Right before the wire sword entangled her, Manaka leaped into the air and stood a couple meters beyond where the wire web was on the rooftop. What Syunaku cut was————although she was unable to see it————it was Manaka's afterimage.

"You can scurry pretty far away in such a quick time frame. Jeez, always so eccentric."

"I never planned on battling against you today. I apologize, but please allow me to leave ok?"

"How unfortunate. If I were to capture you, I'd get a special reward."

"Even though I've asked you before, what do you even plan on doing with the money you make?"

"I've trained all my senses except vision, however my sense of taste has become unusually sensitive. Outside of highly priced dishes that require a lot of time, I probably wouldn't accept anything else. That's why I need to spend money."

".....How unbearable."

Manaka helplessly spoke. Although it was done half in jest, it sounded unnerving since it did not seem like a lie.

She displayed such calmness against the former Sword General, proving herself as a swordsman who ascended to the Seven Swords even without any vision.

“Even if you mentioned as such, can you really just return?”

“Yup, that is my intention.”

“You’re not————going to see that boy again?”

“.....”

Syunaku was of course referring to Kurou.

“That kid who was the disciple of the Sword Saint seemed to have immediately detected my presence the moment he left the hospital. With that battle against the student council president, don’t you think he’s quite an interesting lad?”

“Him being interesting is not something I can deny.”

"That kid's mysterious sword, even my wire sword should be able to defend against it. I would really like to request a match against him."

"......Syunaku, let me just say this first. If you ever harm Kurou-kun…..I'll murder you."

As Manaka stated, she placed the Dancer back in the scabbard.

Without waiting for Syunaku's reply, she jumped from the top of the building.

The school building had four stories. If one were to fall , even a Swordie would suffer some sort of wound. However, she went along the window frames, a small pipeline-esque stepping space, and shortly after reached the bottom.

She did not sense Syunaku's wire sword pursue her. She probably never planned on really committing to a battle against Manaka. If it were a battle, it was uncertain as to who would win. At least to her, battling against Manaka for a reward was overly dangerous.

As Manaka sprinted through the academy, she contemplated over something.

When Syunaku mentioned Kurou's name, she confirmed to herself————although it was for the briefest of moments, her heart did truly waver.

During the past two weeks, lives were wagered in battle and she was injured by the boy.

Manaka respected the disciple of her sister, Sword Saint Hyouka, from the bottom of her heart.

Furthermore————perhaps he was the one who slayed Hyouka.

However, that was not the case this time.

Manaka, who shouldered the burden of avenging her sister, clearly detested him.

Yet she noticed that her hate was also————a stubborn attachment to Kurou.

It was precisely as Syunaku stated. For Manaka to have returned to the place where she caused such a

ruckus not too long ago was abnormal. In fact, it was something that she could not comprehend herself.

Just what will this attachment to Kurou have in store for her in the future?

The answer to that was nonexistent, located not even within her own heart.

The Maidens' Day Off

On that day, Hinako was sitting on a bench within the school's courtyard while leisurely reading a book.

It was three days after the battle royal ended. The normalcy of nothing in particular happening was still in effect.

Currently it was three in the afternoon. Class had just concluded and it was quite rowdy in the direction of the school building. Kurou and Sefi should be back soon.

Although Hinako would routinely follow Kurou to class, she was allowed to roam freely after Kurou was enrolled into the school. She normally sits in when class is in session, but occasionally reading outside like this while taking in the breeze was fine.

As she was about to flip the page, Hinako suddenly stopped in her tracks. It seemed she was ill at ease every time she flipped a page.

Hinako's attire was not her typical cosplay wear, instead it was the Sword Academy's uniform. There was some basis for wearing the uniform despite not being a

student. However, the cosplay attire felt heavier compared to the school uniform and that was likely due to the uniform being mobile for combat.

So I prefer wearing lighter clothes? It was not until just now that Hinako learned of her own preferences.

For Hinako, she had been living in imprisonment within the sun cult's facilities since her childhood. Back then she would only wear what was assigned to her.

The room she stayed in until she was fifteen was comfortable, but she completely lacked freedom. Of course, going outside was prohibited.

The Maiden of the Sun————

Hinako appeared to be referred to as that within the sun cult. Despite that, she had never even set foot under the sun.

Hinako's imprisonment was ordered by her parents who were the cult leaders. Furthermore, she was surrounded by many companions who were tasked with her surveillance.

Perhaps those well-acquainted companions of hers also cared for her dearly. They must have heard her request to be brought to the outside world. Through their assistance, Hinako was finally successful in escaping from the room where she stayed for ages.

However, Hinako and her helpers were caught soon after and she was prepped to return to the facility once again. Right when that happened, the sun cultists and the police were caught in a chaotic scene. She then fell under Kurou's protection as he was pursuing the sun cultists.

Hinako believed that not one of her helpers remained alive.

The sun cult have their normal practices that they do on the streets and they were not a covert organization either. However, a portion of the cult was armed and rebelled against the Swordies. Betraying the government and using banned weaponry, these guys could not be left alone unattended.

Hinako still remembers the gratitude she held towards those who helped her. She also believed that she did something unforgivable to them.

Nevertheless, there were no regrets from her regarding the decision to come to the outside world.

The splendor of the outside, everything she had desired was out here.

Hinako pondered these thoughts while taking in the breeze, calmly passing the time.

“Ara, Hina, why are you here?”

The one who struck a conversation was Sefi, who was carrying a backpack with her. It would appear that she had just returned from her classes.

Being the one who “monitors the two humans”, Sefi was now able to casually converse with Kurou and Hinako. However, she would never show her good relations with them in public. With Kurou’s coarse attitude, it was not like he cared about what they were perceived as in front of other people.

“The weather has been quite good today.”

Summer was fast approaching; right now it was not too cold or hot, the perfect season for being outdoors.

"That said, this is my first time experiencing summer."

"Huh? The first time……"

"Because I was always locked within a room, even though there was air conditioning and it felt comfortable, in the end I was completely detached from summers and winters."

"I-I see……"

Sefi was slightly taken aback. Although, Hinako had no intention to shock her.

"Well, besides that…...why are you wearing that uniform?"

"Ah, you mean this?"

Hinako gently grabbed her own skirt hem.

"An academy faculty gave me this. I can't be enrolled into the school, but at least I won't stand out while wearing this uniform."

"I see, well, I suppose this would be the least attention grabbing."

There were many human faculty members within the academy. However, they were only allowed in due to being part of the workforce. For a human student like Kurou, or Hinako, who was not enrolled or working on the premises, the students would find their existence to be quite an eyesore.

To avoid drawing attention, putting on the uniform should be ok.

“However, why are you still wearing the katyusha? Isn’t that something you wore with your maid outfit?”

“I am here to serve Kurou. Hence, this is so I don’t forget my original task.”

“I’m pretty sure that original task or whatever was long forgotten……”

Sefi made an exasperated expression.

In fact, despite Hinako forgetting a long time ago, wanting to do something in return for the person who risked his life for her————that sort of intention does exist. Except, she has not really acted on it.

“Hina, may I sit next to you?”

"Go ahead."

Sefi sat down next to Hinako.

"Say, you didn't stay with Kurou?"

"Why must I return with him after class?"

Supposedly this was the so-called girl-talk. Hinako was also picking up some common trends of life.

"Never mind that, what are you looking at?"

"This is a shoujo manga. There is a handsome boy on the school stage that all girls are swooned by."

"What a crude description…...Well, I suppose that pretty much sums up all shoujo mangas."

"Do other girls my age live lives like this?"

"Who knows, it's just a manga."

Hinako understood what fiction was.

However, as depicted in the manga, it was of course normal for girls around Hinako's age to be going to school every day, playing with friends, and liking boys.

Hinako had finally realized the extent of her abnormal living conditions.

Although it was not normal to be surrounded by Swordies in her current situation, at least her lifestyle was fine. She was able to happily read a book outside and choose her own clothes.

"Hey, Hina."

"......Hmm?"

"For you, due to the complications regarding the sun cult, it would be tough to say for certain right now…... but after things calm down, you should probably plan on going to school normally."

"Ah, this sort of thing……?"

"I don't think it would be difficult since Hina hasn't done anything bad. If I issue a request to my mother and sister, it should definitely be possible."

It was said that Sefi's mother was one of the four generals. For something of this caliber, it should be quite simple.

However, for the daughter of one of the four generals to be going out of her way for a human…...

"Sefi is a good person."

"What, what are you suddenly blabbing about……!"

Sefi's face was flushed red as she turned her head aside.

By sudden chance, Hinako thought to herself that a government official position would probably not suit Sefi despite her being the daughter of the four generals. She was too kind for that. Even Hinako clearly knew that you cannot just rely on kind words to be a politician.

"By the way, I'm a good person too."

"Huh!?"

".....What are you doing Kuro?"

At some point Kurou made his way towards the back of the bench where the two were sitting.

"Good person? You're clearly a harassment demon."

"That's just instinct. It has nothing to do with my kindness."

"That's nothing to be boastful about!"

"It's sad that you fail to understand me. Well, meeting you guys here was perfect timing. There's something I need to say to you two."

As Kurou spoke, he purposefully squeezed between Sefi and Hinako as he sat down.

Sefi's expression appeared to be saying "what is it", however, there was nothing she could do besides make way for him in silence.

"Due to some circumstances, I was called forth by Sylphy."

"By Onee-sama?"

"Yup, remember how I won the battle royal from before?"

"After you won, it did seem you were still quite troubled by something."

".....Is that so?"

Kurou played dumb towards Hinako's statement.

After his bout with the third-year student council president, Kurou spent the entire night locking himself up in his room and was breathing heavily. He could not even swallow his food. It must have been quite the damage dealt to him.

"Setting that aside, I was told that there would be a prize for the winner and I was able to collect it from Sylphy-sama."

"I see, the student council president did talk to Onee-sama in regards to this……"

"Compared to what the school gives out, Sylphy-sama can provide a much grander prize. The student council president must have been very keen on this as well."

"So what's this prize then? What does it have to do with us?"

Kurou smiled as he nodded.

He patted Hinako on the shoulders.

"Be happy Hinako, you get to go outside."

"Outside……?"

"Yup, Sylphy-sama found a way to issue this order. This Sunday you can go shopping along the streets."

"Shopping…..along the streets……"

Hinako blankly muttered.

Hinako had always been placed in confinement, even now, she was kept within the Sword Academy.

Just as she was able to move freely within campus, this time she was able to step out onto the streets.

The world was slowly expanding for her.

For Hinako, there must have been a bit of apprehension————

“I want to go Kuro, I want to go.”

A rarely seen shine in Hinako’s eyes lit up as she nodded non-stop towards Kurou.

Currently it was Sunday. Kurou had brought Hinako out to the streets as promised.

With an assured manner, Sefi came along as well. When it came to shopping, having a female companion was probably better. That was what Sefi brought up when coming along.

After departing from the Sword Academy, the car ride took about twenty minutes. These streets were teeming with the youth of Swordia.

Tokyo Swordia was noticeably divided into two portions, the Specialized Central Region and the Outer Human Region.

The government and economic capabilities were gathered in the Specialized Central Region. It was the Swordie’s sphere of influence.

On the other hand, the Outer Human Region was predominantly occupied by humans.

There were no police checkpoints, walls, or anything of the sort between the boundaries. Basically, humans and Swordies were able to travel between the two regions at will.

However, even though there were no issues from a legal standpoint, there truly exists an invisible barrier at the borders. As a result, no one would particularly want to cross the borders.

The three of them were of course within the Specialized Central Region.

It was a clear sunny morning. It was halfway into May and although the temperature was a bit high, there was a nice breeze that made it a comfortable day.

After getting out of the car that Sylphy had assigned to them, they instantly followed Sefi's instructions as they set out shopping. Following that, their first target was the department store which Sefi frequents. Compared to the fashion boutiques that teens generally go to, Sefi seemed to prefer the plain stores. Although to Kurou, he did not have the slightest clue as to the difference between the types of stores.

"Hey hey, Kuro, take a look at this."

Hinako, who always maintained that stoic expression, had sparkles in her eyes as they entered the department store.

"What are you doing standing by the entrance?"

"Look at the stairs…...they're moving!"

"....."

Kurou followed Hinako's line of sight, which led to an upward moving escalator.

".....Can I go back?"

"Hold it right there. You said you would bring her here right?"

"Perhaps that might have been the case……"

Sefi stared intently at Kurou who was feigning stupidity.

Common sense was clearly out of the scope of this ojou-sama. Kurou and Sefi understood this point very clearly.

However, who knew her inexperience could reach these levels.

"First let me clarify, I was just kidding. Automatic escalators and such, even I know about that."

".....Right."

"S-Sure."

Kurou looked thoroughly frustrated while Sefi put on a superficial smile.

"W-Well I guess we should be going. Let's start with clothing. How about we go to the store that I regularly go to?"

".....About that Sefi, I have a question."

Hinako had her eyes fixed on the floor layout sign near the entrance.

"It says there are food stands underground? Perhaps it's just the psychological effect, but there is a sweet smell ."

"Suddenly wanting to eat already? Alright, please keep up with us."

After she finished speaking, Sefi grabbed Hinako's hand and marched off.

Although Hinako gazed downwards with a reluctant expression, she did not resist Sefi as she followed her.

Kurou wryly smiled while staying behind the two of them.

As they entered the women’s clothing store level, Sefi led the way, treading through the place in a well-versed manner.

“Oh yeah, Hinako, what kind of clothing style do you like?”

Sefi scanned around in excitement. Even though today was a rest day, she was still wearing her school uniform.

On the other hand, the only proper clothing Hinako had for going outside was her school uniform. Sefi specifically came with them to go buy clothes for that reason.

Of course, Kurou was also wearing his uniform. To him, he preferred wearing his uniform. Although the laws did not prevent humans from roaming within the Swordie region, issues would arise if others noticed he was a human. It would probably be difficult to suspect that he was human while wearing the Sword Academy’s uniform.

On another note, Kurou kept the katana he always used by his waist. Sefi also had a sword on her. Since the sword she normally uses, the Starbreaker, was too conspicuous, she kept a spare double-edged sword. That said, Kurou planned on acting alone to counter any threats that might arise. There were no plans for having Sefi battle at all.

“Oh yeah, we should probably buy some spring wear for you as well. Even though it's already summer, there will be times when the weather turns cold.”

“Ah, I see. Then I’ll leave it up to you Sefi.”

“.....You should put some thought into it as well.”

Hinako was quite intrigued by the urban environment, but not so much when it came to fashion.

“Jeez, if it isn’t a maid, it’s a nurse. Always with the cosplay. That’s why I have a peculiar impression of Hina. Even I have a tough time choosing for you……”

Sefi grumbled as she entered a nearby women's clothing store and proceeded to browse the clothing selection. Despite her complaints, she seemed to be giving it her all.

".....By the way Kuro."

"What is it?"

"It is most fortunate that you were able to get permission for me to come outside, but isn't this just being placed under house arrest by the Sabers?"

"It's unpleasant to hear you calling it house arrest. It's supposed to be protection. Well, it seems not only the sun cult, but even the Blazes are after you. It would be quite dangerous to go outside."

In truth, the Sabers did not even consider guarding Hinako as a top priority. Despite HInako being the daughter of the cult leaders that lead a terrorist group, she was not considered a criminal herself. However, tossing her aside was out of the question so she was captured just for the sake of protection by the Sabers.

In order for Hinako to head out elsewhere, Kurou went to Sylphy for permission. However, it would be more accurate to say that she requested it from the Sabers and then gave permission to him.

Surprisingly, the Sabers knew going into this that having Hinako head out may attract the sun cult or Blazes. If that were to happen and Kurou was able to capture the enemy, it would be a nice bonus.

Most importantly, this was in the name of the prize for winning the battle royal. Since there were no issues with the law and budget, Sylphy giving permission for such a thing was to be expected.

After Kurou elaborated to this extent, Hinako responded with an “I see” while nodding her head.

“However, it’s quite unexpected that they trust Kuro so much.”

“There’s nothing to it. Even if I fail and die, Hinako will just be taken away unharmed.”

“What a dull society we live in.”

Hinako was not particularly mindful of Kurou dying.

“Well, more importantly, the annoying part of being given this permission is……”

As Kurou was speaking, he cast a quick glance towards Sefi. Sefi seemed to be chatting with a store employee that she knew.

“Sefi will also be targeted by the Blazes.”

“Don’t say it was as you had predicted. Although Sefi doesn’t want to be enclosed within the school either. Furthermore, who knows when the Blazes will be wiped out.”

Sylphy would also disapprove, but she likely knows her sister’s tendencies. Being netted within the school, always being protected by others, that would certainly be against Sefi’s nature.

“Anyways, I am here for the time being.”

Kurou patted the katana by his waist.

No matter who attacked, Kurou planned on buying enough time for Sefi and Hinako to escape. Sefi’s abilities

have risen. Even if the opponent was a Blaze, she could probably also accomplish something to this extent.

"Over here Hina! Come over!"

"Yes, I'm coming."

Hinako briskly walked towards Sefi.

Kurou watched as the two of them were beginning to try on clothes within the store. There was nothing to fret about, as long as they were able to have fun that would be great.

It would be quite a mundane life if one were to be apprehensive all the time.

"However, to be shopping with the girls and such, Kurou must really be fearless."

"....."

All of a sudden, there was a pat on his shoulders that stupefied Kurou. His mouth opened in shock.

Over there was————

"Lars? Why are you……?"

"Doesn't your cellphone have a GPS installed in it? All I did was requested the Sabers' electronics division to pinpoint your position……"

"N-no no, I wasn't referring to that. I meant you should stop suddenly appearing out of nowhere."

The person who appeared was Kurou's fellow disciple and partner from the Sabers——Lars. Currently he is enrolled in the Sword Academy for his studies with Kurou. Even though he was not accompanying Kurou, he was still dressed in his uniform. The Beastslayer was hanging by his waist.

"Well, it looks like you just got yourself another guard. The deputy sure likes to indiscriminately order people around considering I just got discharged from the hospital."

".....Yeah."

Despite being a bit startled, Kurou had no intention to complain. Lars had the successor's mark for the Sword Saint too and his abilities were basically on par with Kurou's. With him here, they could probably even buy

enough time against an opponent like Manaka. Furthermore————

"Hey, Sefi, Hinako, look who is here to foot the bill!"

"Cut it out Kurou!"

"You are the son of the four generals. For things like money you guys should have stacks of it right?"

"That's not the case since I'm already independent. I have nothing to do with my parents' wealth."

"Perhaps you could even buy the whole department store. We don't even have to pay attention to the prices."

"Kurou…...are you even listening to me?"

Sefi and Hinako leisurely walked over after they were done selecting clothes.

"So Lars, you were discharged from the hospital too?"

"Looks like you're still alive Lars."

"What a warm welcome."

Lars grinned in response to Sefi and Hinako's comments.

"They all look great. Although, right now I am a tad short on cash. After taking a quick glance, no matter which piece it was, I began to want them all."

"Hmm? Sefi, isn't your family loaded with cash?"

"It's because my family comes from a long line of upright politicians. Just based on the salary of the four generals, it isn't anything extravagant. Although, I can't say we would ever experience poverty and such. However, after the war, Lars' family went into the real estate business and made a fortune. Their business is very successful."

"In other words, using one's status to make money. What an upstart."

"......No, I certainly did not strike it big."

Lars looked a bit befuddled as he tried to explain.

His family was similar to Sefi's family as they were all part of the four generals. Being an only child, he would one day rise to the pinnacle of the country assuming nothing drastic happened.

However, who knows if Lars was thinking about his succession situation. At the very least, Kurou knew that Lars was not someone who would care about his family's power or wealth.

"Now is not the time for this. Hina, let's continue."

"Yes."

Sefi seemed to have lost interest in Lars as the two of them went back to the clothing store.

The remaining two boys looked each other in the face.

Afterwards, the two of them did a fist pound and laughed.

Humans and Swordies, despite being different races, a greeting like this was all that was needed for the two disciples that have grown up with each other.

"Seems like this one is still the best eh?"

Sefi held up a cherry colored dress for Hinako to see.

"If it were up to me, I still think this dress is better……"

"Eh? But isn't that one a tad short?"

"No worries. Since Kurou's sexual harassment is entirely limited to Sefi, I'll be fine."

"It isn't just me!"

Sefi angrily complained towards Hinako's reply.

".....They look quite happy."

"That's good and all, but just how many stores have we went to already……"

Kurou spoke to Lars while revealing his frustration.

Starting from the first department store that Sefi went to, they had already visited many other department stores and fashion boutiques. It was just as Lars stated, going shopping with girls was like asking for a death sentence.

“Maybe it would be best to pretend today never happened.”

“How strange, shouldn’t going out with girls be fun?”

Kurou heavily sighed.

The two of them were in a corner a bit away from the girls with numerous shopping bags around them. They were all filled with Hinako’s clothes.

“Isn’t it great for you though Kurou? You’re just here to accompany them, while I have to pick up the tab.”

“Can’t you let me buy some clothes and shoes while we’re at it? Maybe even a watch.”

“What kind of sorry state are you in?”

Kurou got a menacing glare from Lars. Although the two of them were bounded as fellow disciples, it seemed that was not case when money was involved.

“Rou, come over here for a sec.”

“Eh? Alright.”

Sefi waved him over and Kurou obliged. It would be stupid to waste precious time by refusing.

“Rou, between this dress and that dress, which one do you think is better? I feel like the one Hinako is holding is a little short.”

“I-I see…..”

Having Sefi and Hinako both try out the dresses for him to see, that was what Kurou contemplated over.

Kurou did not believe a short dress made for a great dress. Even if it went down to the ankles, it could still make for a great H scene depending on the situation.

“Well then, just buy both.”

"Whose money do you think it is!?"

Hearing Kurou make his judgment, Lars quickly objected.

"That said Sefi, you're only buying clothes for Hinako right? Why not buy some for yourself?"

"Eh? That's because today was meant for buying Hinako some clothes……"

"Don't worry about it. This and…...this would match nicely right?"

Kurou quickly grabbed a revealing sweatshirt and dress and held both in his hands. If the shopping time was going to be dragged on, he hoped to at least have a feast for his eyes.

"Yeah, I feel bad for Sefi having to solely buy clothes for me."

"Can I get a bit of sympathy too?"

Lars had already been completely reduced to a snarking role.

"Well…...then I guess I'll try it on even though I don't really intend on buying it."

Towards Kurou's recommendation, it seemed like Sefi could not outright say she would buy it. Even so, she would try it on to not appear opinionated. Clothes in hand, she went into the changing room.

"Let me try this one too."

Hinako held on to the dress and some other articles of clothing as she entered the changing room next to Sefi.

"My head kind of hurts, I guess I'll be taking a seat on that bench."

"I hope you feel better."

Kurou waved at Lars as he exited the store. He waited in front of the changing rooms for the two of them with his hands crossed. He decided to turn a blind eye towards the "Ah――" and "Mmm――" moaning sounds coming from Hinako's room.

"Sefi, what shirt was supposed to be paired with this dress?"

"Wha!"

Suddenly, the curtain to the changing room was pulled aside and Hinako's figure appeared.

The front of her uniform shirt was open and her dress was down by her feet————in short, it was practically like she was just in her undergarments.

"Ah, Sefi is currently changing too."

"Enough, go back already!"

Just as the curtain to the changing room was about to be closed back…..

"Eh, are you two……!"

Kurou stated as such.

This time, the curtain was half peeled back as Sefi exited. Now she was not in that undergarment-only state.

Although she was wearing a dress, she was still essentially half-naked. She did not even have her bra on.

"......Amazing Sefi, looks like the Kurou seduction expert has already made this her trade."

"Ha……? Ahhhhhhh!"

With the agility of a Swordie, Sefi swiftly turned her body around in the changing room. Following that, she immediately stuck her head out of the gap in the curtains and stared at Kurou.

"D-Did you see?"

"Now that you mention it, I have seen your appearance after coming out of the shower before."

"Don't bring up the past! Just how many times do you have to see it before being satisfied!?"

"But, you're the one who showed me this time……"

"Y-You're right……sorry."

Sefi slightly lowered her reddened face. Knowing when the error was on her behalf was one of her strong suits.

"Hmm, why are you completely undressed other than your panties Sefi?"

"T-That's because…...lately my bra has become tight again…...plus I was just about to put it back on again."

"I see."

A Swordie's puberty stage was basically identical to a human's. Nothing can really be done if the undergarment size is off.

"Since it was convenient, you let Kuro have a peek right? Which dress do you think matches better?"

Hinako presented the shirt and dress to Kurou.

"What do you mean 'convenient'? Go back already! Rou, don't look!"

"I guess there's no other choice."

With a reluctant response, Hinako dragged across the curtain to her changing room. Kurou thought it might be better if Hinako had more of a bashful side. As he was contemplating this trivial matter, he walked away from the curtains.

"Jeez…...I let him see me like that again…...am I an idiot?"

With tears welling up in her eyes, Sefi muttered as she put her bra back on again. The changing room was very narrow. It would likely feel quite cramped with two people in at the same time.

"Hey, would you like me to help you snap it on?"

"Thanks."

Kurou nodded his head and buckled the light green bra.

"......Why are you in here!?"

Sefi finally caught on and instantly turned her head. Due to the changing room being very narrow, Sefi's soft breasts pressed against Kurou's body the moment they faced each other.

"Umm……"

"Hehe."

"What are you chuckling about? And what are you doing!?"

"Nothing, I was just thinking about whether or not I needed to help the princess-sama change."

"I don't need help you moron!"

Kurou was forcefully shoved by Sefi as he was shooed out of the changing room. After some time, the sexual harassment came to an end.

Kurou walked out of the store. He headed back towards the bench that Lars was sitting on.

"I thought I heard Sefi scream. What did you do this time?"

"Oh just our usual fun and games."

"As a matter of fact, Sefi sounded quite excited at the same time. I really don't understand what's going on between you two."

"That's because the only thing I do is to the extent of harassment and that's all I will do."

Kurou laughed and sat down next to Lars. He did not say anything after that.

For someone like Lars who was also a descendant of the four generals, what Kurou wanted to express was already adequately understood.

“Oh right, I just remembered. Kurou, did you take a hit from the student council president?”

“You’re as sharp as always. How come you even know about these minor details?”

Kurou wryly smiled as he knocked on the spot where he got struck by the student council president with his index finger.

“The student council president seemed a bit peculiar……Although it was just for an instant, I wasn’t able to sense her attack.”

“For that to happen to Kurou……? That is quite strange.”

In past cases, Kurou could predict his opponents based on their killing intent. High speeds could counteract this, but to be completely unable to sense the attack was practically impossible.

However, when he suffered that blow from the student council president, there was indeed a moment where he could not sense her aura.

Kurou sat down with his back leaned against the wall.

“Jeez, we’re nothing but successor candidates for the Sword Saint aren’t we? Unable to match up against the Seven Swords, and we can’t even win against the top Sword Princesses.”

Even some Swordies are mistakened with the process. The successor’s emblem is basically only given to potential successors, but it does not automatically ensure them a Seven Sword title. A better way to put it would be that a “successor” is basically a step up from a “disciple”. Training as a successor, gaining the approval of a Seven Sword, and only at the very end will they become the Seven Swords of the next generation.

Kurou and Lars are definitely not on par with the current Seven Swords right now.

There are also strong individuals like Isyuto among the Sword Princesses. Although they are not on the Seven Swords' level, many powerful Swordies do exist.

".....Hey, Kurou, how stringent did Manaka go on us? Back then, there would be no way we would have the leisure time to shop with girls……"

"She seemed to be filled with revenge towards me."

There was sufficient reason for Manaka to be seeking Kurou's life. Even if Kurou was killed by her he would have no complaints. Although, he never intended on dying there.

Lars snickered as he placed his hand on the back of his head.

"Speaking of Manaka, both of us have known her since we were kids. She was always by our master's side, she could even be described as our second master. She also let us witness her finishing move, the Chaos Dancer. No matter how careless Manaka is, she wouldn't allow her

secret move to be seen by those she didn't trust. Perhaps, Manaka……"

"Are you saying that it wasn't just hatred that drove her?"

Kurou spoke while looking on in a daze.

Battling against Manaka was like walking a tightrope, any mistake would have led to death. However, it was just as Lars said, it would not be hard to kill Kurou based on Manaka's abilities.

"Kurou, I think Manaka isn't such a heartless woman."

"......I don't know about that."

Kurou gave a perfunctory reply.

Due to his battle against Manaka, it was not something that could be easily explained.

Displayed on the TV screen in the corner of the room was some type of entertainment channel.

Although it was mainly about entertainment broadcasts, it appeared to be about some sort of mundane scandal. It was just some boring celebrity relationship news.

This was the room of a certain abandoned tower. It was a five story building and there were probably numerous companies stationed here in the past. Because of the lack of guests, this place is currently at a standstill.

“Haaa…...so boring.”

The person sitting on the sofa in front of the TV was Manaka. Today she was wearing her Sabers uniform as she lazily crossed her legs.

Once the entertainment news ended, the next program began to play. The subject of it was————”Sword General Manaka, the truth behind her mysterious betrayal.”

“Oh my.”

Manaka could not help but smile.

The makings of this program was most likely a human production.

Swordies established discriminatory social patterns towards humans. However, the freedom of press was still permitted to everyone. There was also no thorough cornering of human behavior.

If humans were to take up arms, the Swordies would instantly defeat them. On the flip side, they did not care what kind of resistance the humans implemented as long as they were not armed. It could be said that the freedom of press for humans was used as an outlet for their unequal treatment.

Precisely due to this, it was alright for them to gossip about a top swordsman such as Manaka.

Starting from when Manaka was fourteen she was taken in as a disciple by the previous Sword General. It took her just three years to inherit her title, battle style, superb skills, and even her habits of eating and drinking were passed on.

The news channel even announced topics that Manaka had already forgotten about.

".....What is it?"

"Onee-sama, what are you watching?"

Neena opened the door to the room and entered. She wore the academy's dress with her white shirt.

Neena was not a disciple, but rather a Blaze who looked up to Manaka as her older sister.

For Manaka and Neena who were the instigators of the incident at the Sword Academy, they both went into hiding.

"What is this, some sort of entertainment channel? Although I don't particularly watch these things…...oh, right now they are broadcasting about the past Sword General."

"Yup, that's my master."

The previous Sword General was no longer within this world.

She was also very young, but she faced an aviation accident during her travels outside the country and did not return. No matter how robust a Swordie was, it would be impossible to survive an airplane explosion.

"She was a good person, loved to drink, even to the point where she'd do it right before her battles. What was ridiculous was that she'd only get stronger through her drinking."

"To be honest, Onee-sama resembles her master."

Neena wryly smiled as she spoke. Although she did not mention Manaka's excessive drinking, it was best to keep Manaka under control since it was unclear when a battle may occur.

"She was truly strong. Even right now, if I was asked ' could you beat her', it would cause a headache for me. She was someone worthy of respect."

"However…..even if you say that, she was a Swordie."

"There's nothing you can do about who you resent. Don't you like Sefi as well?"

"Umm……"

In order to take Sefi's life, Neena infiltrated the Sword Academy. Although she became close to Sefi, it seemed that she became overly close and became attached to the princess of the four generals.

"That said, Neena, wouldn't it be great if you could just continue going to school like you did before?"

"Don't joke around please!"

Neena's face turned red as she stepped forward to speak.

She had also heard about the hardships within the Blaze reservation. They were from the complaints of her grandparents who were survivors of the Blaze cleansing. It must have influenced her greatly.

"I intend to fight for the Blazes till the very end. Of course, if Sefi-sama were to hinder me then————"

"Don't get overly courageous. Based on what we were doing, it's safe to say that it hasn't been very constructive . So try not to expect too much out of it."

Manaka spoke with excitement as she changed the channel. The special broadcast on Sword General Manaka had ended and a new TV drama just started.

"Even so, it's hard for us to take action. Our identities have been completely exposed."

"Then please don't go near the academy. It's too dangerous if you encounter the Absolute Sword. Although, there's no way Onee-sama could lose."

"Is that so? Well, looks like it'd be best if I don't go there meaninglessly. Based on what I have ascertained from Syunaku's abilities, her wire sword is capable of battling against groups of people. It would cause a bit of trouble."

"The only ones who would take action are————— Sefi-sama's sister and the Absolute Sword. The other Seven Swords will……"

"No way, the Swordie government isn't stupid. They wouldn't let their precious Seven Sword fighting force be used against us. If there was an injury to the Seven Swords because of this, the loss would be too great. Syunaku was personally sent by Sylphy. The government will only use those that are dispensable to them. Just to have a guy like Kurou is already remarkable."

".....But our enemy isn't humans."

"The government doesn't have the obligation to send us our desired enemies to face."

Manaka shrugged her shoulders while smiling.

Within her expectations, wanting to draw out the Seven Swords would take quite some time. She became the target of everyone from the start due to her position as the past commander of the Sabers. The size of the organization was small, although the vast majority were many male workers, their battle force was not anything to look down on. There were also a couple of Sword Princesses along with Kurou and Lars.

“For now we’ve been quite relaxed. It’s just been drinking and sleeping the days away.”

“What’s the plan for our other comrades? A lot of them are moving out for assassination attempts.”

“Assassinations that result in intimidation and nuisances. Even though the results have been mostly favorable, it doesn’t mean much based on my expectations of the government. Our boss…...seems to have let that person take action.”

“That person…...you mean the Death Sword!?”

Neena’s eyes opened widely while pressing her hands against her chest.

Death Swords————Neena was not very fond of them. For someone who harbored kind feelings towards Sefi, who was her enemy, yet ironically loathed her own partners, Manaka felt Neena was hopeless.

“Well then, that kid should be around here…...is she here to help Onee-sama?”

“Helping me? Well let’s see her abilities first.”

Manaka suspended the conversation and focused on the TV screen once again.

It was hard enough to be released from the burdening task of being a Seven Sword and the director of the Sabers. During this down time, just let me rest a bit————Manaka wanted to drink another can of beer.

The shopping came to a standstill for now as Kurou and the others went to a Japanese restaurant that Sefi was familiar with.

Although Kurou would have felt awkward being in a courtyard or banquet of a high class restaurant, the atmosphere here was very comfortable. The prices of the lunch menu were within normal scopes. Kurou ate some delicious tempura. Quantity wise it was a bit lacking, but he did not have room for complaints considering someone else was treating him. That person was of course Lars.

Backtracking for a bit, by "for now"————that meant that the shopping was going to continue.

"Alright, let's go shopping again!"

Sefi was highly energetic after replenishing her strength. It already felt like Hinako became a test subject for her.

Sefi and Hinako once again took off shopping while Lars followed them.

As for Kurou, he was just aimlessly wandering the streets.

"Haaa——ah."

Kurou deeply sighed.

Since Sefi had said “it will be girls only from here on out!” As a result, Kurou was not allowed to continue with them. However, having no guards for them was out of the question. Lars would have the dual role of being the bodyguard and the one that picks up the tab

Kurou realized that he could move around normally for once. Sefi and Hinako were probably going to buy undergarments and such. Kurou wished he could go with them.

“Well, it’s nice to freely move around occasionally.”

Nothing could be done about this situation which he was forced into. After coming out of the mountains, Kurou worked for the Sabers for a year. Due to the elimination matches, hospital stay, and the battle royal, he had been very busy. To be by himself again and leisurely passing the time was a nice change of pace.

Supposedly he was to receive a text when the shopping spree ended. In other words, from now till then , this was his time of freedom.

Bookstores, CD stores, and such, despite just glancing around and not buying anything, Kurou truly enjoyed his time strolling around alone. Buying something would be fine, but he did not feel the need to. Moreover, there was nothing in particular that he was interested in so he ended up being the type of kid who did not really like to spend money.

"Eh."

Kurou stopped to take a look at a certain shop. The vendor had two crane games lined up at the entrance of the shop. Swordies were also keen on entertainment. At a gaming center like this, all kinds of individuals were around.

"It's been quite a while, let's have a go at it."

After stepping out of the mountains and working for the Sabers, these games have been rare to come by. Starting from when he became a disciple of the Sword Saint, he grew up in an environment with no modern civilization. Although, he would occasionally skip out on patrol duty to play with Lars.

Kurou entered the store and sequentially glanced around at the neatly organized games. Because it was a Sunday afternoon, there were many guests here. Among them, the teenage males were the majority.

At the Swordie gaming centers, there seemed to be a melee game that was currently trending while a swords battle game was popular in human gaming centers. It was quite strange.

As a result of the Sun Cult's frequent activities, there has not been much free time for him. For the time he had been away, a portion of the games were swapped out.

"Darn, lost again!"

A piercing voice resonated within the arcade.

Kurou looked in the direction of that sound and noticed a girl sitting in front of an arcade machine. It seemed like that leather guitar case leaning against the machine was hers as well.

The girl had her pinkish-red hair tied into two strands on the sides of her head with a feather hair clip that gave off a childish tone. She wore a cream-colored baggy

sweater along with a red plaid miniskirt. It was likely some high school's uniform.

Her purple eyes stared at the console with resentment.

She was someone who would attract anyone’s gaze. Those ample breasts protruded from under her sweater. Her waist was thin and so were her legs. She possessed superb proportions and an exceptional figure.

Kurou could not help but be fixated on her.

“Hey, I haven’t seen you before. Welcome.”

After the girl noticed Kurou’s lapse, she revealed a smile. It was as if the entire dimly lit store shined the instant she smiled.

“Yeah, thanks……”

Kurou was unwittingly captivated by that smile and simply returned a proper greeting.

“Ah, do you want to play this? You can play in my place.”

The girl cheerfully stood up and grabbed Kurou by the shoulders, pushing him towards the front of the arcade console. Following that, the girl's sweet fragrance wafted over.

What should I do? Kurou stressed over the situation, which was a rare occurrence for him.

"What the heck, even though Rinne-chan has expressly talked to you?"

"Listen up, hurry and have a seat. I'll knock you down a peg."

Sitting in front of the console that was across from Rinne was a brown-haired boy and a friend of his who had short hair standing close to Kurou. The two of them were approximately the same age as Kurou.

Rinne seemed to be this girl's name.

"Hmm? Hey, aren't you…...a human?"

"He might be. He even has a katana or something on him."

Towards the brown-haired boy’s statement, the short-haired boy revealed an astonished expression. Afterwards, he looked towards Kurou intently as if he was surveying him.

“So what if I’m human? I didn’t see anything that said ‘humans can’t enter.’”

Kurou returned to his senses and smirked. He was very adept at dealing with these kinds of people.

“What did you say!? You sure have some nerve to make a Swordie your enemy!”

The brown-haired guy was aggravated. He did not carry a sword on him, but being a Swordie, he had sufficient strength to kill humans with just his bare hands . Normally, it wouldn’t be a good idea to incite him————

“You’re clearly weaker when compared to Swordie girls. Please don’t scare humans.”

“What are you blabbing on about!? You're just a human, don’t forget your place.”

The short-haired boy lunged towards Kurou, wanting to grab him.

“Don’t think so highly of yourself! That’s right…...are you one of those cultists who have been wandering around here lately?”

“Cultists? You mean the Sun Cultists?”

Kurou was a bit surprised as he asked.

“Ah, is that the name? Did they get the wrong location ? Always trying to persuade others, yet no one even bats them an eye.”

“Yeah.”

Kurou once again felt shocked at what the short-haired guy said.

Although Kurou had known about the Sun Cultists taking to the streets trying to reach out to people, it was the first time he heard about them doing this in the Specialized Central Region.

"Well, I'm definitely not a Sun Cultist. As you can see I 'm just a student."

"What do you mean 'just a student'? Tch, to be wearing what seems to be the Sword Academy's uniform , don't kid us."

It would appear that they know about the Sword Academy. Never in their dreams would they suspect Kurou was a student there.

"That said, this guy seems to have a high temper. Wanna take it outside?"

"You…...even though you have a sword, do you really think you can win against a Swordie?"

"Winning or losing and such, don't get ahead of yourself."

Kurou gave off a smile as he spoke. He was not trying to find trouble, but after seeing these types of men, Kurou had a bad habit of joking around.

"Alright alright, that's enough."

Following that beautiful clear voice, Rinne clapped her hands.

“If you guys are going to fight here, then do it with games. That way there will be no bad blood regardless if you win or lose. That’s the rule around here.”

“.....Is there such a rule?”

The short-haired boy tilted his head.

“I made the declaration just now. You have a problem with it?”

Rinne also tilted her head. She was clearly replicating his movements, but the level of cuteness was on a completely different level. Although, suggesting that the boy was cute was hard to accept.

“W-Well, if Rinne says so then……”

“Defeating a human through games is also interesting ……”

The brown and short-haired guys seemed to understand even though they felt perplexed.

At some point in time, a crowd gathered around Kurou and the others nodded in approval.

From the looks of it, Rinne was treated as the princess-sama of this arcade.

“Then let us four engage in an elimination match. Who will be my opponent?”

Rinne wryly smiled as she once again sat in front of the arcade machine.

Kurou could not help but feel that his rhythm was disrupted.

“Ah, haha.”

Rinne was skipping around as she was heading forward. Her hair, dress, and the guitar case she carried on her back were swaying around as she moved.

How did it end up with the two of them walking together after Kurou left the arcade?

"What an exciting day. It was my first time winning like this."

"Must be very gratifying for you……"

Kurou was not really interested in Rinne's excitement.

After proposing that Kurou, the brown-haired kid, and short-haired kid engage in alternating elimination matches, Kurou lost every match, including the numerous matches afterwards against the arcade regulars.

This was especially true when it came to the dozen or so matches against Rinne. Despite them being competitive matches, he still lost them all.

The matches against the arcade regulars could not even be considered battles. However, since his losses against Rinne were out in full view, it was even more aggravating.

"Who would have thought there'd be someone in this world who would consecutively lose to me."

Rinne's eyes were sparkling.

Referring to herself with “boku”, this extremely sprightly girl seemed to be inept at playing these arcade games. Although she appeared to be a regular at the arcade, her ranking must have always been at the bottom . Furthermore, she had never relinquished this spot to anyone else before. Solely due to her clumsiness and cuteness, she was treated as a princess within that arcade .

“Oh.”

Rinne suddenly composed herself. The sides of her hair fluttered for a moment and following that she lowered her head.

“I’m sorry. There’s nothing amusing about me being overly excited. Since I haven’t even been able to beat even a novice before, I was very ecstatic when I won.”

“No worries.”

After receiving her frank apology, Kurou finally regained his focus. He could clearly predict his opponents’ attacks in battle, but he had absolutely no grasp of that when it came to a video game character’s

movement. Speaking of which, Lars was very strong in this regard and always had Kurou pay for the arcade fees .

“By the way, why are you following me?”

Since he was continuously losing, Kurou decided to leave but for some reason Rinne tagged along.

“That’s because I’m very happy today.”

Rinne said that without hesitation. Although it was not quite a valid answer, Kurou displayed a “well, whatever ” kind of expression. Plus there was nothing wrong with taking a walk with Rinne.

“Oh right I forgot. My name is Rinne, you can call me by name directly since everyone else does the same. What about you?”

“Kurou, although my original name was Katsuragi Kurou. Just call me Kurou.”

“Alright, Kurou-chan it is.”

“K-Kurou-chan?”

Rinne completely ignored Kurou’s dissatisfaction. She appeared to really like this type of address as she nodded her head excessively.

“I’m hungry after an exciting day of playing. Kurou-chan, want to go try that out?”

Rinne pointed toward a small stand by the sidewalk. A barbecue aroma drifted from that location.

It had rotisserie consisting of numerous thinly cut up pork slices folded up with shredded cabbage mixed together. That was then added to some pre-baked bread. In the end, it looked like a type of sandwich. It was apparently a popular item in the Swordie homeworld. For Sefi to be routinely visiting that Japanese restaurant, it could be said that Swordies had already been integrated into the Japanese food culture. However, they had not forgotten about the cuisine of their own culture.

Kurou grabbed one that had spices added to it while Rinne selected the one with a sweet flavor. After buying some juice from the vending machine, the two of them sat together at a nearby park bench as they ate their food.

"Wow, this is great. Their seasonings are quite excellent."

Rinne took a seat right next to Kurou. She was joyfully munching on the sandwich. Since Kurou did not eat enough during lunch, he felt this was fine. Moreover, the seasoning was indeed pretty good.

However————, Kurou squinted at Rinne.

"What's wrong Kurou-chan?"

"Are you……a Swordie?"

"Yup."

"……I'm a human you know."

"Ah, you think I mind that? Those two just now weren't bad individuals. For humans to be on a lower standing than oneself————it's those who taught them that who are in the wrong."

"……"

At a quick glance, Rinne looked as if she was not putting much thought into her words, but she was surprisingly pondering over this situation. At the very least, it was because of one's identity and arrogance that those who look down on humans would even draw a dividing line.

"To me, I don't see other people as Swordies and humans. The only difference I see is there are those who are good at gaming, and those who aren't."

"Isn't that a bit too rash……?"

In the end, it really did feel as if she did not put much thought into it.

“Don’t worry, don’t worry. Besides Kurou-chan, to me you are a very special existence.”

“We’ve only known each other for thirty minutes.”

“That’s because————you’re an opponent who is on the same level as me in combat. That’s very valuable.”

“.....Is that so.”

On the topic of being on similar levels, Kurou did not quite understand that after having frequently lost to some foolish tactics. In truth, a battle against an opponent that is too strong or weak lacks significance.

However, being on the same level, well……

Kurou surveyed Rinne from head to toe. Since it was Kurou we were talking about, it was understandable. Perhaps she————

“I always eat sweet foods so I was wondering how the spicy one tastes?”

"Hmm? Oh, it's pretty good. It isn't even that spicy."

"Is that so……well, let me have a taste."

"Eh?"

Before Kurou could recover, Rinne suddenly lunged out to grab a bite of his sandwich. Kurou had no time to react to this surprise attack.

"Mmmm……that's tasty. It's truly delicious."

"Mhmm."

Without hesitation, she bit off half of Kurou's sandwich. If it were Sefi, this sort of maneuver could never be accomplished.

"Kurou-chan, try some of mine this time————eh?"

While Rinne was chewing on the roasted meat, she suddenly became tongue tied.

Her eyes gradually welled up with tears as she covered her mouth with her hands. She seemed to be muttering something indistinctly.

"What is it? Is something wrong?"

"……Waaaaah, it's too spicy! Kurou-chan you liar! This is way too hot!"

Rinne tearfully glared at Kurou.

So it was like that huh. Kurou's gaze fell on his sandwich. Although he did not feel the spiciness was to that extent, it might just be a matter of personal tolerance .

"Wuu, I'm going to cry……"

"No, you're already crying."

No matter how robust a Swordie's body was, it seemed there were also those who feared spicy food.

"Jeez, you idiot."

Rinne knocked on Kurou's shoulder. Despite having held back her strength to a great extent, it was still painful.

"Ouch, that hurts. Hey."

Kurou instantly grabbed hold of Rinne's fist. Even though she was just lightly waving around her fist, it did feel quite heavy.

Having had her fist grabbed by Kurou, Rinne revealed a stupefied expression.

"……Huh?"

"Ah, my bad."

Kurou unwittingly released Rinne's tightly clenched fist.

Even with that, Rinne still stared intently at Kurou————no, she seemed to be looking towards the empty space behind him.

"……What?"

"Umm——……"

The blankly staring Rinne gradually started to break out in a blush. It must have been an indication of her embarrassment. Could it be due to the spicy food?

Rinne reverted back to normal as if nothing happened. She drank the rest of her juice in one go. Was she embarrassed after having her hand held just now?

"……Ha, looks like my preference is still sweet foods."

"That seems to be the case."

Kurou wryly smiled and then quickly ate the rest of his sandwich. Even for an innocent child like Rinne, who would have thought that all it would take was holding her hand to make her shy.

"……Kurou-chan, want to try mine as well?"

"No thanks, I'd rather not."

Kurou shook his head when Rinne was passing him her sandwich.

After turning her focus away from Kurou, she nodded and began to wolf down her sandwich.

Kurou slowly started to take a liking to this girl.

It was already past three in the afternoon.

Kurou was still with Rinne.

“Hey.”

Rinne was walking across the overpass.

As he gazed at her near dangerous levels of revealing dress, he suddenly recalled the suspicion he had before.

“Rinne, do you play the guitar?”

“Eh? Oh, I guess you can call it a hobby.”

Rinne nodded while gently knocking on the guitar case that she carried on her shoulders. She then proceeded to do an air guitar maneuver. For the Swordies who were fully integrated into earth’s———— Japanese culture, there were quite a few musicians.

“By the way, is it ok for you to be so laid back? Even though I have some down time, but what about you Rinne?”

"I'm practically the same. Although I do have a job, there just haven't been any tasks for me lately."

"What kind of job is it?"

"Hehe, that's a secret."

Rinne sheepishly smiled.

"Today is a rest day. Afterwards all that is left to do is go back home and sleep.

"That sounds quite boring."

"Yeah, it truly is. Fortunately I was able to meet Kurou-chan today."

Rinne reached the stairs and began to aimlessly walk along the overpass.

"Oh yeah, Kurou-chan let's exchange emails. I already did the same with the group of arcade goers. If there's a new game or someone new I can win against, be sure to tell me."

"Ok, will do."

After Kurou retrieved the phone from his pocket, the phones underwent an infrared connection to exchange emails and phone numbers.

"Alright, here it is. Actually, I've never sent emails or anything before."

"Same with me. I've only had a cellphone since the past year or so."

That should be obvious. Since the Sword Saint and her disciples resided in the mountains, it was impossible to get a cellphone signal. Even if a signal could reach, it was not like he had anyone to talk to.

Suddenly, Kurou's cellphone ringtone sounded. He pressed the talk button.

"Hello?"

[Hello, Kurou-chan can you hear me?]

Rinne had her elbow set against the overpass railing. She was talking into the phone while glancing at Kurou with a devilish expression.

"Yes I can, even if you didn't call I could……"

[I’m just making sure whether or not this would actually go through. I’m quite the worrier.”]

Rinne gave a quick smile and placed her cellphone back in her pocket.

Something was wrong, Kurou suddenly felt uneasy about her. Despite her outgoing nature, she was not just any ordinary cute girl.

An uneasing aura manifested around her.

Just what is it about her that is causing this? She was clearly an optimistic one, yet she gives off an unsettling feeling. Perhaps there was the possibility that Kurou was overthinking this as well.

“Ha.”

Rinne gently rose on her tippy toes on one leg while standing on the railing. The width of the railing was about 15 cm at best. Below the overpass was heavy traffic . Normally speaking, one would never step on there, but for a Swordie, even toddlers could pull off this trick.

“.....By the way Rinne.”

"Hmm?"

"Your panties are revealed if you stand there."

Actually, that happened whenever her miniskirt fluttered in the wind.

"Ahh, hey, that's not right, who said you could peek."

"I'm not even trying to peek."

"Umm…...do you want to look?"

Rinne grumbled while pressing down on her miniskirt.

"Well, honestly speaking I do want to see."

"You're such a pervert. So aggravating, men are really ……"

Rinne was shaking her head nonstop while wryly smiling.

"All the boys in the arcade would always look at my legs. That's not right at all. You shouldn't let anyone catch your line of sight."

"That's nothing, it's not like it's a battle."

The regulars at the arcade were Swordies so it was obvious that they practiced their swordsmanship at school.

However, Kurou felt that there was absolutely no one threatening there. Well, besides one person.

"Jeez, it's so boring. My panties were seen without me detecting it. Now there's nothing left to see. This is quite aggravating as well."

Rinne spoke with a smile on her face. She maintained her tippy toe posture as she hopped along forward.

Kurou followed behind Rinne. Although it was impossible for her to fall from there, Kurou did not plan on leaving her unattended.

Once they reached the bottom of the overpass, Kurou's ringtone sounded. However, this time it was Sefi.

"What is it?"

[Hello, Rou? Sorry for the sudden call, but things have turned for the worse.]

Sefi's tone sounded a bit anxious.

"What turned for the worse?"

[I was a bit immersed in shopping…...plus Lars was waiting outside so……]

"Did Hinako get lost?"

[Yeah…...you guessed right. I'm so sorry, I was being too careless……]

It would seem that Sefi admitted to her mistake.

Since she was a girl, there was not much that could have been done for her shopping immersion. However, for Lars to not notice was quite unusual.

Perhaps Sefi did not let him come near the undergarment shopping area? If that was not the case, it should have been impossible for that guy to lose sight of the person he was supposed to guard.

"What about her cellphone? Did you try giving Hinako a call?"

[Now that I think about it, Hina still doesn't have a cellphone……]

"Oh."

Darn it, Kurou finally realized what happened. For Hinako who was always within the school grounds, this was an unnecessary device. Thus, she was not given a cellphone.

"We should have given her a cellphone from the start. That was way too negligent for me as well."

[For now, I'll be searching around over here. Kurou you should converge with us.]

"Got it."

After setting up a meeting point, Kurou hung up.

In the end, this situation was nothing to be surprised about. Hinako always walked about aimlessly. For that to happen when she was brought out on the street was to be expected.

"Sorry Rinne. Something came up——"

Just as he ended the conversation with Rinne…..

Rinne, who was originally walking ahead, stopped in her tracks. She was blankly staring at something.

“Please support us! Please support us!”

Following this imposing manner of calling out to others, something like a flyer was extended towards Kurou.

The crest of arms and logo which he had seen countless times, was printed at the top of the leaflet.

“The Sun Cult……”

“Please sup——K-Kurou!?”

The person who handed Kurou the flyer was a girl wearing a white cloak and a blue nun outfit.

Her name was Kido Akari, a Sun Cult girl whom Kurou had met many times before during their terrorist activity encounters.

“These people were the Sun Cult members that were mentioned before I bet. Kurou-chan, do you know her?”

"I suppose I do….."

After responding to the blankly staring Rinne, Kurou displayed an agonizing expression.

He had work to attend to still, yet there was even more trouble————all he could do was let out a deep sigh.

Kurou and Rinne were currently next to the station's entrance.

Although Kurou was unaware, after running around he ended up near the station.

In this crowded place, there were three nuns from the Sun Cult and ten male cultists in uniform. They were all holding leaflets and distributing them to pedestrians.

However, the cultists were completely overlooked. The pedestrians————were practically all Swordies and they paid no attention to the cultists. None of the Swordies even seemed to bat an eye at them.

"Jeez, you guys……"

Kurou ruffled his head while speaking.

"What are you guys doing here……?"

"You still don't know after seeing us!? We are promoting the Sun Cult's teachings!"

Akari responded in a provocative tone. She had always been like this. Kurou had even seen her in a half crying state when she became angry.

"No way. To be doing that in the Specialized Central Region, I'm not buying it. No one would trust a human religion since everyone here is a Swordie."

Rather, usually Swordies do not follow any religion. It was said that in Swordia there were numerous kinds of religions, but the number of people holding on to those beliefs after coming to this world were quite scarce.

"You have no right to say that! There are even Swordies among us!"

"But aren't they just guards?"

Kurou had battled against many Swordie fighters employed by the Sun Cult. Most of those were just mentally insane people who did not care who they fought so long as the opponent was strong.

"All in all, you guys are here in this kind of place to gather more believers……Oh yeah, Akari, did you leave the combat division?"

"Guh……!"

Akari had infiltrated the Sword Academy with other Sun Cultists in the past. When they were driven out by Kurou that time, she said she did not wish to continue fighting. Despite being opponents on the battlefront, there was no way Kurou could ever resent her. He honestly did not want her to engage in any perilous activities.

"T-This is also an important practice! Even though we don't have any weapons right now, we can still kill you right away!"

"You don't have the guts……"

"Haha, Kurou-chan and this girl sure have a good relationship."

Rinne happily jumped into the conversation.

“What do you mean by ‘good relationship’!? Who are you anyways!? Kurou, you must be quite lucky to be going out on dates with girls on Sundays!”

“The time is right for a date precisely because it’s Sunday!”

Rinne purposefully said something that added oil to the fire.

She easily admitted to a date, leaving Kurou feeling a bit awkward.

“Y-You……this date……”

Akari clenched her fists while quivering.

“Then how about Akari goes on a date with me next time?”

“How can that even be possible!? You’re in the Sabers so you’re my enemy!”

“I suppose so.”

Kurou was playing dumb. However, the Sun Cultists were in no mood to play along.

The male cultists displayed a rather grave expression as they surrounded Kurou. Incidentally, even Rinne was caught in the encirclement.

“Akari, you said this guy is from the Sabers, is that true? He even has a katana on him. Is he the rumored human within the group?”

“Ah, about that……”

A suspicion surfaced within Kurou. Why did Akari hesitate in admitting to that? Kurou could not even recall how many Sun Cultists he had slain. Even right now, it was not surprising that rumors about Kurou were floating around within the Sun Cult. There must have been many who despised Kurou. Even if there were no implications behind this, Akari should still have no reason to do such a thing.

Akari focused herself once again and eyed her fellow cultists.

"Everyone, today our mission is preaching our beliefs. There's no point in getting into an useless dispute with this guy."

"……In that case, there's been something on my mind from a while ago."

"Shut up."

Akari interrupted Kurou while sharply glaring at him.

"Actually, despite Akari always putting on airs, you're just part of the cadre or what? And you're just a high school student right?"

"That's what's on your mind under these circumstances……?

Akari, who was at wits end, glanced over.

Having been surrounded by the widely known armed division of the Sun Cult, this was perhaps not even an issue for him. However, Kurou displayed no fear at all.

"Who cares about that! You know we've lost a couple members! If that guy is truly Kurou from the Sabers, there's no way we can just stay silent!"

"Yup yup, I am Kurou from the Sabers."

"W-What are you……"

Kurou easily admitted to it. Following that, Akari just looked at him in silence.

The Sun Cultists were not armed. Although they hold a lot of smuggled contraband firearms, it was not like even the flyer handout guys would be armed. Even if they were, Kurou would not be troubled at all.

"A fight for our lives, this way there'd be no resentment left……even though that's what I wish for, it probably can't be done."

"Don't give me that crap!"

A male cultist yelled out.

"Except, today I still have work. Furthermore I have a girl with me as well."

Kurou shot a quick glance at Rinne and noticed that she was smiling and waving towards the cultists. She was not shaken at all.

“If possible I’d like to try to avoid any blood being shed. Since I won’t bring out my sword, you guys can come at us with your fists.”

“Are you a hooligan or what?”

The person who ridiculed him was Akari.

“Fine with us. Once we defeat him let’s send him back to headquarters!”

One of the cultists came at him with a punch. Surprisingly his movements were quite good, befitting of such a scary terrorist group. Despite being a religious organization, they seemed to have some variety of battle training as well.

“However, you still have a long way to go.”

Kurou saw through the cultist’s movements, avoided his punch, and then backhanded him in the face. After the sound of the punch, the man toppled down onto the ground.

After seeing that display of technique, the other cultists clearly felt afraid.

Kurou could not be compared to a Swordie, but as a human he had already trained over his limits. Even when using his heavy katana, he was able to freely manipulate it with his arm strength. If a human was hit with such strength, they would easily be knocked into a daze.

“What? No need to mention it, it’s just a quarrel among humans!”

Kurou intentionally said out loud. At a quick glance, it would be hard to believe that Kurou was a human.

“Whether it’s a Swordie or the police, no one would bother interfering. So hurry up and come at me!”

Indeed, on this street there was no one who would intervene in a struggle among humans. Swordies had no interest in these matters. The police would only get involved if it was between Swordies.

Kurou slayed Sun Cultists in the past due to his missions. However, he felt he was not in the wrong for doing so. If there were people who carried a grudge

against him, there was nothing wrong with having a playful fight. Nevertheless, he did not plan on taking a beating and staying silent over the issue.

The Sun Cultist men came at him all at once. Humans were different from Swordies and their preference for one-on-one battles. There was no hesitation in attacking as a group.

Moreover, Kurou would not hesitate either.

For someone who was used to seeing a Swordie's sword, a human's movements were like witnessing slow motion. The Olden Style was not even needed. Kurou dodged the punch that came swinging at him and began his counterattack. He grabbed another person's shirt, which lowered his opponent's head, as he kneed him in the face. After that he elbowed the guy who attacked from behind in the abdomen.

"Ah, that looked like it'd hurt."

Rinne raised her brows and used her hands to cover her face. She was probably very at ease.

"Capture that girl!"

The first person to suddenly rush at Kurou issued an order to the other cultist. After seeing his comrades fall one after another, perhaps the current battle method was not enough to take out Kurou.

The cultists who were given the order immediately charged at Rinne.

Damn, those guys don't know Rinne is a Swordie.

When Kurou remembered that it was already too late.

“Eh?”

Rinne was stunned. The cultists reached out to her, wanting to capture her————

“Hey hey, how dare you touch a Swordie girl.”

Rinne smiled as she spoke. She nimbly turned her body and avoided their hands. After that, the other cultists wanted to come from behind to reign her in.

“Oh.”

Following that tone of disappointment, Rinne swiftly swung her right hand.

Right when that happened————the cultist was sent flying.

“What!?”

“Huh!?”

The same thing happened to the guy who came from the front trying to grab her and the other guy who was trying to trap her from behind. They were gently lifted in the air and then blown a couple meters back. Their backs violently crashed against the ground.

“That was……”

Kurou could not help but be stunned as he looked towards Rinne who was smirking.

What did Rinne do? Kurou was not sure. No, she must have just lightly swung her arms. Even Swordies cannot just blow two muscular guys away. In that case————

“Kurou-chan, behind you.”

“……Got it.”

Kurou turned his body halfway after hearing Rinne's warning and unleashed a roundhouse kick. His kick landed on the guy trying to do a grapple move from behind him.

The cultist started bleeding from his nose and fell down————that was the last of them. All the male Sun Cultists had already fallen flat on their backs.

"Well, I guess that's it."

Kurou satisfactorily clapped his hands. Although it was a clean win for them, none of the Sun Cultists were actually dead. Tentatively, they had taken the fight to an appropriate degree.

Akari and the other two nuns just stood there stupefied.

The situation afterwards can just be passed on to them perhaps. Of course, Kurou was never planning on assaulting human girls.

"Hey hey, what's going on? Rolling over like a dead fish. So much for me helping out, it even looked quite interesting around here."

"……?"

Kurou followed the sound of that voice and turned his head.

Coming out of the station was two figures.

One of them was a muscular male who was wearing a cultist uniform just like his fallen comrades. He had short hair and wore glasses. He was probably about twenty years-old, but his hair had already turned white. From a quick glance at the insides of his left sleeve, it was casually wrapped by bandages.

Walking next to him was a petite girl. She looked like a little student, perhaps at most she was in middle school. Her height was approximately 140cm. Although she was wearing the same nun outfit as Akari, her dress was rather short and sleeveless.

The two of them walked up to Kurou and then stopped.

"The one holding the katana is a human right? He has a rather cute face as well."

"Umm……."

Kurou was quite startled at his words.

He seemed to be a Sun Cultist as well, however he sensed that he was quite dangerous.

"I'm only kidding. It's just as you see, I'm a lolicon."

"Please tell me you're joking about that as well."

A truly dangerous man. There was nothing more bizarre than just the two of them being together.

"Well, that doesn't matter. The pink-haired girl is a Swordie? What a strange grouping, a human male with a female Swordie."

"Your group is also very strange."

"I suppose you're right."

The bulky guy laughed after he spoke. He leisurely closed in on Kurou and Rinne.

He very casually closed the distance. Moreover, it did not seem as if it was a technique from any swordsmanship or wrestling.

However————

"…….!"

Kurou hurriedly backed off and pulled out his sword.

He felt a chill run down his back as cold sweat trickled down nonstop.

What is it with this guy————!

The bulky man was not a Swordie. Based on his aura and movement, one could predicate that he was human.

Even so, warning signs were going off in Kurou's head . It may just be intuition, but he had no doubt that it was right.

"Lay down your arms, I'm not planning on doing anything."

The bulky guy smirked while shaking his head.

"I was only coming here to help hand out flyers. Those guys appear to be still alive. Fighting will only make the situation worse for us."

"……I agree."

Kurou nodded and proceeded to return the sword to its scabbard.

"Well then, let's head back Snow White. Can you please take care of those two over there? The remaining guys can just walk on their own."

After that, the girl named Snow White approached the two cultists who were passed out. With one person in each hand, she picked them both up. The moment her hands were placed on their backs, she gently lifted them up as if she was lifting up a tray.

As if nothing had happened, the bulky guy and Snow White headed off towards the station. It did not really matter, they were probably just going to carry the knocked out cultists on the tram with them.

"……I hope our next encounter can be more peaceful Akari."

"I don't want to hear that from someone as reckless as you Kurou."

After Akari coldly stated as such, she began calling out towards the fallen cultists.

Kurou was completely serious about what he just said. No matter the circumstances, he always seemed to be very mindful of this Akari girl. Wanting to meet her in peace was a sincere desire of his.

"……Hmm? Eh?"

Suddenly, Kurou noticed something. Rinne's figure was nowhere to be found.

Just a moment ago————when the bulky guy was approaching them, she was without a doubt still around. Once Kurou was not paying attention, she disappeared.

Kurou instantly forgot about the Sun Cult situation and ran off. As he ran, he took out his cellphone to make a call.

"……Is this the Electronics Operating Division? There's something I need to ask."

Kurou dialed the number that directly connected him to the Sabers' Electronics Operating Division. After telling them his affiliation and ID, he told them Rinne's phone number.

"Can you track the cellphone location for this number? It should have a GPS in it."

Within a short period of time, the Electronics Operating division transferred the coordinates to Kurou's cellphone. He stopped in his tracks and opened up a special Sabers' map from his cellphone. Two bright dots were displayed on the screen.

One was at Kurou's current location while the other one was————

"It's moving."

The other bright dot was rapidly moving away from Kurou's location. It would be best if he hurried.

Wait, hold on. First I should get in touch with Sefi————these two options surfaced in his mind.

"What's moving?"

"A girl. I'm going to try and track————eh?"

Kurou suddenly looked to his side.

Standing over there was a familiar black-haired girl.

"……Hinako?"

"Yes, it is Hinako."

She had her usual stoic expression while she was slowly eating a crepe-like treat.

It was just one thing after another————From the looks of it, the time to feel at ease for Kurou seemed to be far away.

The End of the Forgotten Street

The sun was slowly setting below the mountains.

An orange radiance covered the road. As if a gentle breeze was pushing it across, a small piece of trash rolled along the street.

Kurou and Hinako were walking side by side on the sidewalk.

Starting from the shopping district, they rode the tram for approximately twenty minutes as they exited the Specialized Central Region towards the Outer Human Region.

The street that they were walking on was vastly different from the bustling plaza from before. The place was devoid of people and even the occasionally appearing shops were all closed.

Kurou checked his cellphone screen. The bright dot that was displayed was indeed pointing towards the front of the road. The flashing dot was over a certain

building. Was there an issue with the accuracy of the GPS? It was impossible to tell if the cellphone user was still wandering around.

"There's not really a place to eat."

Hinako muttered as she walked.

"If it's here, you won't get lost as easily at least."

Kurou was at wits end.

Hinako would always get lost just because there was an indistinct pleasant aroma. It felt like she was enticed by the smell of crepes this time for her to get separated from Sefi.

"Getting lost in this place would be pretty boring."

"Stop looking for excitement when you're getting lost! That said, you didn't have to follow me."

In truth, she really should not have followed.

Kurou originally wanted Hinako and Sefi to group up. However, she insisted on coming along. Perhaps she thought hanging out with Kurou would be more interesting than shopping.

Furthermore, it was possible that Rinne's cellphone could not be continually tracked. If for some reason she turned off the power, then the Electronics Operating Division would no longer be able to capture the GPS signal. It would be troublesome if the distance between them was too great.

Since there was no time to waste on arguing, Kurou instead just gave Sefi a call to report that he had found Hinako and the two of them were going to stroll around a bit. After telling her that, they arrived here.

"By the way, who are you trying to chase?"

"So now you ask."

Should have asked from the start, that was what Kurou thought to himself as he explained the situation.

That situation consisted of him leisurely walking around by himself until he met a girl and splitting up

with her after the Sun Cult incident. Moreover, it seemed like————

"That girl is perhaps a Blaze."

Kurou had not confirmed that, but he felt he was essentially on point with this.

Her movements when she was about to be captured by the Sun Cult were…..

Her hands did not even touch the opposition and when the two cultists were blown away————that was mostly likely her mystic artes.

Just based on intuition it was clear that she was very strong. Sizing up a person's strength was a necessary skill for a swordsman. Kurou had already thoroughly honed this technique.

Just when Kurou explained up to this point……

"How come you can understand that from just a glance?"

It was a very common question.

"It's just based on your feeling of your opponent. By looking at their unconscious movements, sensing their aura and such you can tell. When you've experienced numerous encounters against other swordsman, you'll just be able to sense it. For someone like Sefi who is just a first-year in the academy, she would probably still have a hard time doing so due to her limited experience. However, for me and Lars, we are able to judge to a certain extent."

"Can you just tail her based on an intuition? It just seems like you're stalking a girl……"

"It wouldn't be bad if my hunch was wrong. However ……"

There was no way I could be wrong, Kurou thought to himself. The place Rinne went to was an abandoned neighborhood. It was not a place a girl would particularly want to go to. At the very least, Rinne was not an ordinary girl, that was for certain.

"Hmm? The road ends here?"

Kurou nodded to Hinako's comment.

The path Kurou and Hinako were currently walking———had a single bicycle lane along with two sidewalks. In front of them, there was a gate with a police checkpoint sort of station. There were also railings blocking out any vehicles and people. In the middle of the street, there was even a sign placed there with the words “do not enter” written clearly in red.

Kurou was going through his cellphone as he checked detailed reports for the nearby area.

“I see……”

Kurou thought as such. Following that, he continued forward and easily went over the railing that was at about waist level.

Hinako took a quick glance at Kurou. Since they had already come this far, she could not just go back by herself. Kurou grabbed her hand to help her over the railing.

“What happened here?”

“This is————a Blaze reservation.”

"Reservation……"

"Yup. The surviving Blazes from the cleansing which occurred after the war were separated here. The reservations, like this one here, act as a prison ground for them. Actually, I should say this used to be a reservation."

There was a large neighborhood, a closed up shop, and an old tower further up the road. In the distance, one could even see factory buildings of some sort.

Moreover, there did not seem to be anyone here.

In the neighborhoods that Swordies reside in, generally speaking there would be plenty of greenery. Since Swordia was a world covered in vegetation and with their homeworld nostalgia, they would be restless unless the streets were covered with greenery.

Although this district had plenty of lush vegetation——it was completely unkempt. Whether it was the trees or grass, all of it was growing wild. The cars stopped on the side of the road had vines growing all over them. It was pretty much a ghost town.

"Hmm——"

Kurou retrieved the geographical data from his cellphone's mapping program.

"It appears that the place was shut off when the number of Blazes dwindled. Perhaps they planned on reopening it later."

Rather, it seemed to be completely set aside. Currently they were in the Outer Human Region, but this was without a doubt still within Tokyo Swordia. However, for it to be only a twenty minute tram ride from that bustling district to a reservation was quite unexpected for Kurou.

"What to do now?"

"What to do? What do you mean?"

Towards Kurou's statement, Hinako revealed a puzzling expression.

"Rinne is located somewhere within this ghost town. If she is a Blaze, perhaps it could get dangerous."

"You don't have to worry about me."

"No way."

"I'm not Sefi, so even if you chase this Rinne girl I won't ridicule you."

"That's what you meant!?"

After snarking in response, he regained his focus. Now was not the time to fool around.

"I don't think Rinne would make a surprise attack, but it can't be said that there'd be no issues going forward. Plus retreating from here might be an option."

"However, does Kuro plan on going by himself?"

"I don't know."

"I'll be fine by myself. Actually, I'd like to try something with that Rinne person."

"What do you plan on doing if you meet her?"

"If she's cute, I'll go report this to Sefi."

"W-Wait! Hold on a sec! Please keep this a secret from Sefi!"

"If you're requesting me to do so in such a manner, I suppose I'll back off……"

Hinako revealed a very somber expression. Kurou was currently looking quite pathetic.

"Well, right now it isn't time to be goofing off."

"Do you really want to retreat? If you do an investigation, perhaps you might figure out something about the Blazes."

"It'd probably be best not to know what they're planning. Nothing good comes from knowing your enemy."

"True, it's because Kuro is very gentle."

"Yeah…...huh?"

Kurou unwittingly nodded and then looked towards Hinako again. Did I mishear something just now?

"If you know too much about your enemy, it may be hard to take action."

"Even so…...that doesn't mean I'm gentle."

Although Kurou did not believe that he was heartless, he was not going to obliviously brush it off as being gentle. It was not just Kurou, but all swordsmen were the same. Even though Lars said that Manaka was not emotionless at that time, she was not someone who would hold back against an opponent.

Furthermore, Hinako did not understand how swordsmen think.

“I’m putting an end to this topic. Since we're already here we might as well go further on a bit.”

Kurou glanced at the map to confirm their location. This place was a small park. In order to get closer to the targeted building, he would have to go across the park.

The two of them entered the park.

The park had swings, slides, a climbing wall, and a sandbox. It was a very complete park. However, each facility was quite corroded.

“I had heard the Blazes were segregated, but to think they had a park like this.”

"They were probably only provided with the bare necessities. I feel that this park was just shoved into this narrow space as some sort of entertainment facility for them. Plus this was probably just all a facade and it's highly probable that the children were denied usage of the park anyways."

"Kuro sure is pessimistic."

"I'm just explaining my speculations is all."

"Really? Well, I suppose I don't really have any interest towards this Blaze matter."

"That's really unfortunate."

"Right now there is something I wish to say to Kuro."

"Huh? What is it?"

Right as Kurou questioned her, Hinako headed towards the swing set. After lifting herself up over the wooden swings, she took a seat.

"This is my first time sitting on this type of thing."

"You're a tragic story yourself aren't you……"

While being locked up within the Sun Cult facility for so long, she most likely never had the chance to experience these recreational facilities.

"However, I know how to work these things since I've read about them in shoujo mangas. You just swing around like this————and then kick forward."

"Although you're on the right track, there's something wrong with that."

Before her legs flew up, Hinako did not properly swing herself up. Basically, when it came to anything involving her body strength she was still very inadequate .

"Is there something you wanted to say?"

"There's nothing I can do for you in this case."

"Huh?"

Hinako looked towards the distance while swinging.

"I'm always under Kuro's protection. Even right now that holds true. However, I haven't been able to repay you in any way."

"There's no need to repay me. Protecting Hinako is my job. Plus I get paid by the Sabers."

"Was using that hard earned reward on me going outside due to your job as well?"

"……We live in the same house. If you aren't happy, I won't be either."

"I'm always depressed regardless if I go out or stay indoors."

"To have some sort of impression is good enough I suppose……."

To be precise, it was impossible for Kurou to see eye-to-eye with Hinako. Having been imprisoned till she was fifteen years old, even after leaving that place she was still confined within the academy. If Kurou were to just abandon a girl like that, there was no way he could consider himself a human being.

"To Kuro I'm just someone you guard. Is that why you won't tease my body like you do with Sefi?"

"Don't mention such unpleasant words. It's because I have a very high level of skinship with Sefi……"

"I see."

"Don't you think your character has deteriorated more and more?"

"That's why I want to take advantage of this time before it gets worse to ask you something. Kuro, I won't say anything. Regardless if it's Sefi or Lars, I won't speak a word. So now there won't be any issues right?"

"No issues……what are you referring to?"

Hinako got off the swing set and casually approached Kurou. After getting to the point where their bodies almost touched, Hinako raised her head and gazed at Kurou

"Sefi selected this for me and the underwear I'm currently wearing is decorated in lovely laces."

As she was saying this, Hinako began unbuckling the buttons to her jacket. Following that she pulled down the front of her shirt collar and her pure white skin slowly came into sight.

"Hold on! There's no need for you to do this!"

"It's best to not do anything huh. Those are such cruel words Kuro."

"……"

Perhaps so, Kurou could understand her point of view.

"I'm not as cute as Sefi. Therefore, this is the most I can do for you."

"You're also very cute————hold on, actually I have no interest in this stuff."

"It's ok Kuro……I've already made up my mind."

"Whatever it is, you don't have to————"

"It's fine. I……already know what it's like having my breasts felt."

"Huh?"

Kurou was dumbstruck. Hinako's shirt was close to being completely unbuttoned, revealing her cute laced bra. Even her overly ample chest was coming into full view.

"That's what you were getting at?"

"Eh? Doesn't Kuro jump at the opportunity to stare at Sefi's breasts? Don't you love breasts more than anything else?"

"It's not like that……"

There was the fear that she was going to let him go much further beyond that. However, Hinako misunderstood and that was partly because of Kurou's frequent obsession with Sefi's breasts.

"What I meant to say was————"

At that point, Kurou leaped a couple of times

As if he was swooping in on Hinako's body, he pushed her down on the ground.

At that moment, an air piercing sound could be heard followed by an explosion.

"Tch……!"

Kurou clicked his tongue. While protecting Hinako, he noticed that there was a red object that flew across him.

A flame snake————!

"Neena!"

"A marvelous dodge. However, that isn't at all shocking since I know about your strength."

A girl came in from the entrance of the park. She had pigtails and was wearing a tightly fitted black suit. Furthermore, she was wearing glasses which were rarely seen among Swordies. Behind those lenses were eyes glowing with a red hue.

The light blade grasped in her hand had a faint light enshrouding the thin blade.

"Long time no see……although it hasn't been that long . Neena, seeing you so full of life is all I could ask for."

Kurou stood up and then grabbed the hilt of his sword .

“You haven’t changed a bit. You’re clearly still teasing Sefi. Even now you were about to act atrociously to this girl.”

“Just as he was about to act, you stopped him.”

“How impolite of me.”

Neena gracefully bowed. She appeared to be quite serious, yet unexpectedly enjoyed joking around.

“However, it’s perfect that you’re here. I’ve always wanted to burn down this park.”

“You should take advantage of this kids park.”

Kurou was just messing around while gazing at where the flame snake————Neena’s mystic artes directly struck. The wooden swing was already roasted without a trace except the two dangling chains. The area below was also burned. It was quite a tragic sight.

Kurou had already seen Neena’s mystic artes numerous times in the past. Since he was already used to

the sound of the snake flying by, he was able to sense it coming.

"Hinako, are you hurt?"

"Since Kurou pushed me down in time, I'm fine."

Hinako denied the notion. She was just dirtied up a little bit, but there was not even a scratch on her it seemed.

"That's good. Well then…..why is Neena here?"

"That should be my line. Why are you here? If it wasn't you, I was originally planning to just overlook this and head back."

"……Hmm."

Based on Neena's words he realized something. She seemed to be hiding out here in this ghost town.

Although he was thinking that could not be all there was to it, if Neena was here then that meant————

"Hey, Neena, don't be acting so conspicuous since we are prisoners after all."

"……"

Sure enough, Kurou's ominous premonition came true .

Another girl appeared from the entrance of the park just like Neena.

She was wearing the Sabers uniform that he was already accustomed to seeing along with a bright red jacket even though it was clearly summer.

"Ah, it's Kurou-kun and Sakurai Hinako. To think we' d meet up here."

She was the former Sword General and director of the Sabers. She was also the sister of Kurou's master and a member of the Blazes who betrayed the Swordie government.

"Manaka, seems like your wounds have completely healed already."

Kurou felt cold sweat running down his back, but he was already used to that. Those who climbed to the Seven Swords have overwhelming light power. Her light

was not to the point where he would shake uncontrollably, but just seeing her made him nearly faint.

"That was all thanks to you, but I'm fully recovered now. On the other hand, I was originally supposed to have slain you but you seem to have healed quite nicely."

Was this some psychological effect? It felt like Manaka was very excited. Was she delighted from seeing her sister's enemy?

"I never would have thought I'd see you here. What are you doing here Manaka?"

"Even if you ask, isn't it just Kurou showing up to where we are currently living."

"This isn't normal. Your hideout is within the Blaze reservation?"

Although the hideout seemed to be pretty successful, to choose a location that had some relation to them was perhaps too daring.

"Lifelines still run through here actually. I can watch TV and drink ice cold beer after bathing."

"How perfect."

Having electricity in an abandoned neighborhood seemed very odd. However, this doubt was better off being set aside for now.

"Speaking of which Kurou-kun, since I answered a question of yours, can you answer one of mine? Why are you even here? Did the Sabers already discover this place ?"

"The Sabers is a highly touted organization. I know you are clearly aware of this."

"Yeah, it wouldn't be surprising if they actually did find out. However, it's quite peculiar that you would be here by yourself. Furthermore, you're even being so cautious as to bring Sakurai Hinako with you."

Her words did not seem to be lies. Perhaps it would be best for Manaka to think that the Sabers had already found their location.

"I was hoodwinked by some girl and let her get away. I went in pursuit since I was reluctant to part from her and so I ended up here.

"Ah, so that's it."

Manaka indicated as if she had figured out everything.

"I was wondering where that kid went. In that case she brought some extra baggage back with her."

"I'm considered extra baggage? The kid you are talking about……is that Rinne? Is she here?"

"Is she? I'm not that kid's guardian so I wouldn't know."

In the end, he only arrived here due to the GPS signal. Although he was not totally sure, it seemed that this was Rinne's residence.

In that case, his guess that she was Blaze was correct.

Manaka, Neena, and now Rinne, these three Blazes being here was not particularly interesting.

It appeared that this was not an idle location either. Before the situation continued to worsen, he had to consider some retreating tactics.

"Oh oh Kurou-kun, I have some good news for you."

"I'm quite interested."

"There's no point in thinking about escape."

"If one always avoids the impossible, then they can't continue to grow."

"However————trying to do the impossible is also pointless."

Just as Manaka displayed a frightening smile, the sound of footsteps could be heard. It was not just one or two people. The sound of those footsteps soon closed in on the park.

"……Heh heh."

Kurou felt anxious but he was still smiling on the surface. In fact, perhaps a smile was the appropriate response.

There were thirty or so female swordsmen surrounding the park. All of them were wearing the same black suit as Neena, plus they each had their own personalized swords.

Furthermore, each of their eyes emitted a red light. That sort of red glow was the confirmation of a Blaze.

"……Kurou, you mentioned before that you can understand the difference in power from a glance right?"

"I believe right now it'd be best if I didn't understand."

Kurou responded with a smile towards Hinako's quiet muttering.

The swordsmen surrounding the park were all on par with Neena or perhaps even above her. Excluding a monster like Manaka, there still would not be anyone who he could handily win against.

"We are also considered as a race of Swordies so there is no way we'd smash Kurou all at once. Except, we don't plan on letting you escape either."

Manaka drew her personalized sword————the Dancer.

"Before we were just concealing ourselves. I was told to be careful and to cease any unnecessary movement.

Well, perhaps I did go against that just a bit but there are worse things that can happen you know. Although I can't guarantee to what extent, but if you don't resist we won't take your life."

"O-Onee-sama!? Why can't we take advantage of this opportunity to cut him down————"

"Neena, even I will comply with the matter that someone reminded me."

Despite Manaka speaking very calmly, her words had this cryptic meaning.

Back when he confronted Manaka, he felt as if there was someone even above Manaka in all this. That person must be the leader of the Blazes, that was what Kurou thought. Right now he had other things to contemplate over.

No, there was nothing to think about actually.

After taking a quick glance at Hinako who was right next to him————

Kurou placed the sword by his waist onto the ground and raised both hands.

"Understood, I surrender."

After the sun had already set, a calm night descended.

It was currently night time in the former Blaze reservation and there was basically no activity outside.

Manaka returned to her own room within the abandoned tower————well, the room that she called her own without permission. She was relaxing on her favorite sofa.

Manaka really enjoyed the tranquility of this neighborhood's evenings.

"Onee-sama, why are you doing this!?"

However, that calmness was broken up by Neena's shrilling voice.

"What are you yelling about Neena? Nights are supposed to be peaceful."

"Even if it's from you Onee-sama, I can't just let it slide . Although we can just extradite that Sun Cult girl, Kurou should be killed as quickly as possible!"

"I have no intention of being kind to that kid. I already explained this before didn't I? It isn't wise to kill Kurou-kun right now."

"Wouldn't it be great if we caused a disturbance with this? It would certainly be more interesting!"

"You totally sound like a Blaze."

She was very energetic. The only incurable drawback to that was she always wanted to cause unrest. Since Neena lost to Kurou twice, there was some spite mixed in . Overall it did not amount to much. One would not think that the Blazes were an immoral group just due to their pursuit of revenge.

"Just imprisonment and such isn't enough to dispose of him."

"That's probably not how they are thinking."

Kurou and Hinako were locked away in the basement of the abandoned tower. The rigorous treatment of tying

them up was so they could not escape. As for them thinking it was a very forgiving disposition, that was rather unlikely.

"Speaking of which, how is that kid who brought Kurou-kun along doing?"

Manaka purposefully changed the topic. That was because even Manaka could not explain why she did not immediately just kill off Kurou. She also did not want to lie to this sister-like figure.

"Rinne is already asleep."

"She's sleeping?"

"She seems to have returned to her room and immediately went to bed."

Rinne's room was in a residence located near the abandoned tower. What was she doing here then? Manaka did not inquire about that.

"Playing outside without permission and sleeping away after she had her fill. What in the world is she thinking?"

"That's unexpected."

"Ha?"

"Neena, are you thinking about what's running through that girl's head? There isn't really a need for that . Rinne is a Blaze who ranks above you. Just rely on your own abilities to survive. It has nothing to do with common sense anyways since for all we know that kid doesn't even act rationally. Well, don't worry about it too much. She's a Blaze and she isn't one at the same time, so just think of it like that."

Manaka was not really well acquainted with Rinne. Although upper management had sent her for Manaka to look over, she did not plan on interfering with her.

"Are you saying to implement our approach from before?"

"Exactly. You still carry some of that exhaustion from infiltrating and doing battle at the academy so you should get some much needed rest. I'll be resting as well. "

"……Alright."

Although Neena did not seem like she was completely accepting of this, she still nodded.

Manaka, who was not her master, was seen by Neena as an older sister that she looked up to. She was a very cute girl.

In fact, she had never really thought about it before but perhaps taking on a disciple would have been beneficial. During her time as the Sword General, Manaka did not accept any disciples. The reason was simple. As a Blaze, betraying the Swordie government was just a matter of time. It would be too tragic if her disciple were to be dragged into the conflict.

However, accepting a Blaze like Neena as a disciple should be alright. It was a fine proposition, but it was still open to discussion for her.

“Umm, Onee-sama?”

Neena voiced her doubts towards Manaka who was lost in deep thought.

“Oh, sorry. It’s best if we consider what will happen from here on out. Perhaps changing up our hiding location might be best.”

"Our plans over there are nearing completion too."

"Helping out like that is quite like you. You helped prepare their dinner too after finishing the preparations right? Although, it's just fast food as usual――――"

Just now, the cellphone that had been lying on the couch the whole time sounded. It was a different cellphone compared to before. The cellphone she had when she was the director was already destroyed.

"Yes it is. Hello."

The person calling Manaka seemed to be someone she was well acquainted with. She stayed silent while nodding along.

After speaking on the phone for a couple minutes――――

"Well then."

Manaka closed her phone and turned towards Neena. She then revealed a slightly troubled expression.

"Onee-sama?"

"Neena, there's something unfortunate that I have to tell you."

"What is it?"

"Looks like our break is over. Jeez, if I knew it was going to end this early I would've went to the southern islands to rest on the beaches and drink ice cold beer."

Manaka gently used her index fingers to tap against her cellphone.

"Since I have been summoned, I'll be heading out for a bit. You take care of things around here."

"Yes Onee-sama."

"Neena."

"Yes?"

Manaka smiled and gently hugged Neena.

"Now that the park is already burned down, you have broken free from your shackles. Now you should be able to have some more freedom."

“.....Nothing else matters as long as I can battle alongside Onee-sama.”

“Enjoying life is a must. I follow that saying as well.”

Manaka lived for revenge, the revenge of the Blazes as well as her own personal grudge.

Manaka also noticed that she did enjoy those things. However, she clearly understood that taking enjoyment in such things would result in her heart being engulfed and twisted.

Manaka held on to Neena and prayed————hoping that this child would not end up like her.

“It’s almost dinnertime right? You think they’ll give us some food?”

“You still think about food under these circumstances? ”

Kurou exasperatedly recalled Hinako was also a conceited person.

The place seemed like a basement of some sort within the abandoned tower. There were no windows and they were surrounded by cold concrete walls. Despite the ground being carpeted, there was no furniture in sight. The air was also stuffy so it looked like staying comfortable was out of the question.

Speaking of which, Kurou's hands were handcuffed and he was firmly chained up. In fact, the chains were tied to the pipes along the walls. As a result, he could only sit down as he was pretty much immobilized.

On the other hand, Hinako was only handcuffed so she could move around freely within the room. However , the room was locked from the outside so she was unable to leave. Plus since it was her, there was no way she could break Kurou's chains.

Basically the two of them had no means of escape.

"I'm speechless. Who would have thought there'd be Blaze after Blaze in addition to Manaka and Neena."

"Even Kurou has no chance when facing that many people."

"There'd be a chance if it was all of them except Manaka……well, if they all used mystic artes at the same time I'd be screwed."

Since there was a long preparation time for the mystic artes and openings would occur to a person's stance during this time, the dangers were relatively low in a one versus one battle. However, if it became a concentrated artillery barrage then it was a completely different matter .

"Mystic artes? In that case, if I'm able to……"

"No need to overthink the unnecessary."

Kurou specifically stated to her.

Back when Kurou was battling against Manaka, Hinako was able to dissipate Manaka's flame snake and seal her mystic artes. Actually, it was uncertain as to whether Hinako did seal her mystic artes since she does not even recall that instance very clearly. However, no one else really fit the bill except her.

"There's no need for you to get involved in the battle. Stay away from doing anything dangerous."

"……Kurou, you're really going overboard with the protecting."

"I told you before, this is my job."

In truth, Kurou believed those without weapons should not participate in battle. This was especially true when it came to Hinako, who possessed no battle capabilities, getting involved.

It was a grave mistake to bring her here in the first place.

"Hmm……if Kurou is in this state, then we can't continue where we left off at the park."

"Are you still going on about that?"

"What, do you want me to make the first move?"

"Hey."

Hinako stood up in front of Kurou which startled him. Her legs were exposed from the uniform's miniskirt and she approached him at a frighteningly close distance.

Even he himself did not notice. Kurou enjoys sexually harassing others, but he was not very sure what to do when it was the other way around. His heart started pounding in embarrassment.

"Look——"

"……."

Hinako deliberately muttered as such while gently lifting up her dress. Although her panties were not visible, her white flawless legs were exposed to a dangerous extent.

"Well, don't go thinking that you owe me anything. This is just a bit of service is all."

"Why are you……"

"It seems Kuro is having it quite tough, so that's why I wanted to let you vent your frustrations a bit."

"……Thanks."

Although he tried his best not to show it, Kurou was indeed depressed. After all the Blazes treated him as

some sort of beast, even going as far as tightly tying him up like this.

"I'm at a loss as to what to do now. Looks like this doesn't work too well if I don't have any knowledge in regards to sex."

You have learned so many strange things that even I am worried. Originally, Hinako was known for not being sure on what to do under any circumstance.

"Ah, speaking of which."

"Now what?"

"Quite some time has already passed since separating from Sefi."

"Ah yes, that's true."

"Sefi will certainly be mad."

"Ugh……"

It had already been two hours since they were last in contact with Sefi. It was probably going to become dark outside soon. While Sefi must have been worried sick, she was likely enraged as well.

“My cellphone was taken away from me, perhaps even destroyed.”

It was unlikely that Lars would be able to use the GPS to track their location. Regardless if it was Sefi or Lars, neither of them could have possibly imagined that Kurou and Hinako would be in a Blaze reservation.

In short, there was no other way to escape besides relying on his own strength.

“I guess there’s no choice……should I try it anyways?”

“Are you planning on attacking me while in that tied up state?”

“Umm no?”

“Or perhaps you mean you enjoy being tied up.”

"That's wrong too! Like I said, you should stop learning all these unnecessary things!"

Needless to say, he meant he should try to do something about the handcuff and chains.

His katana was also confiscated. After going through a body inspection, his dagger and other small items were seized.

In other words————

He can only use his Light Body.

"Ha——……"

The drawback of using the Light Body before had not completely dissipated. Furthermore, Kurou used the Light Body a handful of times before, but never had he tried activating it without a one month gap minimum.

To add to that, there was no guarantee that he would be able to sever the chains even with the Light Body. Even so, he could not continue in this tied up state. That was because there was no guarantee that Manaka and Neena were going to keep their word.

"Hinako, quiet down a bit."

Hinako nodded in response.

For the Light Body, if he was not completely focused it would not work. In other cases, he must be under perilous circumstances. That was why even under his calm state right now it still might be impossible to activate.

"————Hmm."

"Ah, there we go."

Just as Kurou let out a deep breath and was trying to concentrate, the door opened after a clunking sound. That sound was due to the lock being forcefully pried open.

"Ah so it is Kurou-chan after all. Followed me here eh?"

"……Rinne?"

Rinne paid no mind towards Kurou's confusion and slowly approached him. She was wearing the same uniform as before along with that guitar case.

"Oh yeah, I apologize for before. I suddenly decided to leave. Those were Sun Cultists right? I had a sense that some troublesome folks were present and that things could have gotten hairy."

"The Sun Cult does have some annoying people. That must mean……"

Hinako seemed to feel bad about something.

Although Kurou intentionally tried to forget about him, that bulky guy with glasses did indeed emit a fearsome aura. He was likely a human, but why did he sense such danger from him? It was truly puzzling. Except, if Rinne also thought the same then Kurou must be spot on.

"I heard that Kurou-chan was defeated by Manaka-chan."

"Manaka-"chan" eh……."

"I was hoping you'd criticize the 'Kurou-chan' part as well."

Hinako was just muttering and it seemed as if she did not intend to incite a response from Kurou.

"Well, who cares about what's going on with Manaka-chan."

"You're kidding me!"

"However, well……what should I do? It's a real head scratcher."

Rinne tilted her head as she spoke. She squatted down in front of Kurou. Since Rinne was in a position where she tucked her hands, her white panties were visible.

"I'm having a headache……Ah, Kurou-chan, you're still peeking!?"

Rinne spoke with a hint of embarrassment as she firmly dragged her dress over her knees, thus covering up her panties.

"That's because Kuro likes panties a lot."

"That was unnecessary!"

After Kurou glared at Hinako, his line of sight shifted back to Rinne.

"Setting this stuff aside, what are you doing here Rinne?"

"I was asleep for a bit but then I heard some sort of ruckus. Afterwards I overheard something from nearby people. A human was said to be captured so I thought could it be……Well, they'll probably be mad for me helping out Kurou-chan."

"Rinne is also a Blaze right? In that case, there's no way you could help out."

Of course it would be great to receive her assistance. However, Kurou was not that optimistic to expect help from the enemy.

"Yeah~~, what to do. Honestly, I don't really care about the people here."

Rinne raised her brows while unwittingly extending her hand towards Kurou's hair. She nonchalantly stroked and tugged his hair. She seemed to be unconsciously doing this.

It was safe to say that she was different from the other Blazes. She was not part of that group of Blazes who surrounded him, so perhaps that was indeed the truth.

"……Ah."

Suddenly, Rinne let out a quiet squeal as she fell on her butt. Her legs were spread open and her panties were revealed again.

"……W-What happened? I didn't do anything."

"You don't have to find excuses for me……."

Hinako showed an exasperated expression towards the flustered Kurou.

Rinne stayed in that spread out state and shook her head.

"Ah——, what a rare occurrence. I have been seen like this twice in one day and both times it was Kurou-chan."

"Well, I'm pretty sure your panties have been seen more than twice per day……"

If someone were to wear a dress as short as Rinne's, it would also be visible on countless occasions.

"Who cares about my panties. Actually, this isn't good, but it's useless to be concerned about such matters when dealing with Kurou-chan."

"It sounds like I'm quite pathetic."

"This girl is quite fast in figuring that out. Even Sefi hasn't reached that way of thinking yet."

Hinako swooped in to continue the attack. Perhaps it would be best if I showed some restraint in my sexual harassment. Kurou stressed over such a thought.

"That's no good, then it won't be good for the others."

Rinne stated something incomprehensible as she reached for Kurou's body. She casually grasped the chains wrapped around Kurou and sliced it apart as if she was cutting through vegetables.

The chains fell to the floor. Following that, Rinne made her way towards Kurou's back and freed Kurou's hand from his handcuffs.

"Rinne, what are you……?"

Kurou wriggled his wrists which had regained their freedom while giving Rinne a cautious stare. Allowing him to regain his freedom, there was a good chance a battle may ensue.

"It's hard for me to explain. I should probably free that girl over there as well."

Rinne released Hinako from her handcuffs. She did not cut through the chains of the handcuff, but rather the cuff itself was severed. What a frightening display of power.

"Well, you guys get going. Since you guys are trying to get outside, I'll be your guide during that time."

Rinne smiled as she spoke.

Although it was just Kurou's intuition————but beneath her smile there did not seem to be any ill intent or anything else.

Rinne trotted along inside the reservation at night.

In order for them to not be left behind, Kurou held on to Hinako's hand and followed Rinne.

The tower where Kurou and Hinako were locked away had no one on lookout. They were probably at ease after having Kurou firmly bound. However, if it was Kurou, he would somehow find a way even if there were a few guards.

Kurou was running along while surveying the streets around the reservation.

He had heard about there being signs of life here, but the street lights and such were not even on.

Actually, there being signs of life here was strange now that he thought about it. Why was there electricity in this already abandoned reservation? Perhaps the Blazes' influence had already extended deep into administrative departments and power companies.

Kurou contemplated over such matters as he sprinted with Hinako in hand. The reservation had an eerie stillness with only the sounds of footsteps echoing clearly .

The three of them had arrived at a place with towering walls. Following that, Rinne found a door and opened it. On the other side of the wall was an even more spacious area————it seemed to be a playground.

"……So they even have these facilities here."

"They allow Blazes to do some light exercises, although it can't be with swords. After you go through here there should be a shortcut."

Rinne responded to Kurou's murmurings. Perhaps she grew up within this reservation. Kurou was not very knowledgeable about being raised within a reservation. It was likely an isolated region where none of the Blazes there were allowed to wield a sword.

Was life in this district really that pitiful……

"……!"

Suddenly, they were surrounded by an eye piercing brightness.

There were lighting fixtures along the walls that were emitting beams of light.

A girl walked towards Kurou from the door that he had just entered. She had glasses on and was wearing a tight fitted black suit. Her right hand was holding a slender sword. This girl was————Neena. The sword was covered by the light of a light blade. It seemed as if she was completely prepared for battle.

For some reason she was holding on to Kurou's katana with her left hand.

"Looks like that shortcut was to the gates of hell."

Kurou nonchalantly muttered.

Neena ignored Kurou and instead sharply glared at Rinne.

"Rinne-san…...I really didn't think you'd be a traitor."

"No way that'd be possible. I would never become a traitor. You were told by Manaka-chan not to attack right ? However, Neena-chan————"

"You saw?"

Neena took off her glasses and looked towards Rinne with a serious expression. Rinne on the other hand smiled, acting as if she did not notice the frightening atmosphere.

"Yup, it's just as you see. I've already completed the preparations."

Rinne took a quick glance around her.

From the other entrances, wave after wave of Blazes came out to surround Kurou. All of them were like Neena and had their weapons at hand.

"Neena-chan…...you intend to kill Kurou-chan and defy Manaka-chan's orders?"

"So what?"

Neena provocatively spoke as she tossed the katana to Kurou. Kurou caught the sword that was thrown to him with enough force that it actually numbed his hand.

"I'll give this to you first. Killing an empty-handed enemy is not my intention."

"So this is what you were planning Neena-chan."

Kurou still did not know what was going on, but Rinne appeared to have seen through Neena's plan.

"This guy is too dangerous. Although they are just ordinary people, they did harm Onee-sama. If he is allowed to live, he will interfere with our plans."

"Such lies."

Rinne shook her head and smiled.

"Rinne-chan only felt a bit uneasy towards Kurou-chan. However, your Onee-sama would always be attentive of Kurou-chan. That's why————you wanted to kill him without permission. That's the behavior of a true traitor. You shouldn't do this."

"……Shut up!"

Neena had nothing else to say.

"Please stop your silly imaginations! The earlier we kill him the better!"

The Blazes standing behind Neena just stood there in silence. Rather, they had no objections to Neena's statements.

Kurou felt anxious as he was listening to the two of them.

Even though Manaka was not around, which made the situation better, there were thirty other combatants around Neena. Was he going to have to battle against all of the Blaze swordsmen himself? If Rinne returned to the enemy side it would become even more troublesome.

Rinne seemed to go off of her own judgment to betray them. Perhaps even the one versus one trait might be overlooked as well since Neena understood that it takes more than one person at a time to beat Kurou. Although he should rejoice over having his katana returned to him, he still wished that his options were better.

This was especially due to Neena seemingly giving her all in this. If Kurou was willing to put down his sword, it was unlikely that he would be allowed to surrender.

"Even if it's Rinne-san, if you try to protect this guy then————"

"Seems like there's more to it than just this."

After Rinne finished speaking, her gaze shifted over to the walls. Kurou detected that and immediately went to protect Hinako by tightly hugging her.

Boom————there was an ear shattering explosion.

A scorching wind blew by. Smoke and debris also flew up into the sky as all visibility went away.

After that————

"Everyone stop and put down your weapons!"

Kurou heard a familiar voice.

From the smoke, she could be seen wearing a red jacket. By her waist was a longsword and a dagger representing a Sabers swordsman————it was deputy

Sabina making her appearance. One by one, members of the Sabers appeared behind her.

"What in the world? What are you doing here Kurou?"

".....In that case, it looks like you guys aren't here to save me."

Kurou was not shaken by the sudden change of events as he spoke. In fact, the one who was surprised was the deputy.

"Of course. There's no way I'd be able to watch over every member during their breaks."

The deputy began to concisely explain the whole story behind coming here.

"We don't have that sort of leisure time. Since the Blazes went on a killing spree of officials, we've had to deal with new evidence in regards to the new crimes. One of those incidents was particularly carelessly carried out. Following that, we pursued that individual and deduced that this was their destination."

"Umm, Rinne-san……"

"Ah, are you trying to say that carelessness was from me?"

She was being stared down by Neena, but Rinne returned a frivolous smile.

Despite the situation of the Blazes being a mystery to Kurou, Rinne seemed to be the fox who had its tail caught. In that sense, she did mention something about a job before.

Rinne was also a criminal who engaged in assassinations, right?————Indeed, it did not seem she would be able to secretly carry out her objective.

"Well, I already understand what's going on now….. however, this is quite excessive deputy."

"Even if the enemy were humans, one shouldn't be hesitant over bringing out their best as long as the opposition's strength is unclear."

Kurou found that to be reasonable.

The Sabers members who kept appearing behind the deputy————must have numbered over a hundred. Female members consisted of about 30% while the rest were males.

The core of the Sabers' battle force had all gathered together.

".....Anyways, what was that explosion just now?"

"You don't know? It was a grenade launcher."

The deputy spoke as if it was nothing. Upon closer inspection, many of the male members were holding firearms with small barrels.

"The Sabers are not permitted to have weapons equipped I thought?"

"Since these idiots showed up, we had to consider how to deal with them. We also got the approval of the government. Nevertheless……"

The deputy glanced across after the smoke cleared. Over there was Rinne, Neena, and many other Blazes. It seemed none of them suffered even a scratch.

Other than damaging the surrounding walls, the grenade that flew into the playground did not really accomplish much.

"Looks like we are being underestimated. These weapons are the kind you'd find in war. To think you'd actually try to use something like this to challenge us."

Neena tightly grasped her sword while glaring at the deputy.

"Don't you have any dignity as a swordsman? How dare you use firearms."

"And what's wrong with that? We put our public security force status before being a swordsman. Taking down you idiots is our utmost priority. Dignity and such, failing a mission would be even more shameful so anything is fair game."

The deputy stared back with contempt.

What she said was the truth. With the new threat of the mystic artes, if certain measures were not taken then the planning process would be incomplete.

"Well, firearms have been outlawed for too long. This was all we could muster up in a short amount of time. Who knows what other interesting equipment we have these days."

"I eagerly await to destroy them."

"Enough boasting you imbecile. However, I don't like firearms either. For a battle between swordsmen that has been hard to come by, the use of firearms is unpleasant and should have a limit. Furthermore, that's applies to mystic artes as well."

"Although you can't use them, to ban its usage for me is quite troublesome. Back then, even other Swordies besides Blazes could use mystic artes."

"I don't know anything in regards to that."

Suddenly, the deputy charged forward like a bullet.

She pulled out the two swords by her waist as she went past Neena's side. Even though the slightest mistake would sever her own wrist with this technique, the deputy of course was not the type to make those errors. Akin to a ferocious gale, the two swords were

quickly crossed as her pathing resulted in an "X" shape. Regardless of the sword drawing motion or swordsmanship, her attack was basically invisible————No, it was a simultaneous attack.

"Guh……"

"Gah……"

The two Blazes had their neck and chest slashed before falling over. They were likely Blaze swordsmen who were on par with Neena, yet they were killed without even being able to respond. Sabina was not the Sabers' deputy for nothing.

"What's this? Even though you're all Blazes you guys are surprisingly weak."

"I had hoped you'd save that sort of phrase for if you're still alive after this."

Neena attentively raised her sword. She and Kurou had battled twice so he was used to her swordsmanship. I should be able to battle her myself. Just as he was thinking along those lines…...

"What are you doing Kurou, hurry up and go."

"Deputy?"

"Protecting Sakurai Hinako is your mission. Having her stay in such a dangerous location would be going against orders. Do you wish to suffer a salary loss?"

".....In that case."

Sabina seemed to want Kurou to run away. In fact, under these circumstances, there would be too many openings for Kurou if he were to participate in battle.

"Rinne-chan!"

Suddenly, Neena loudly called out to her.

"These Sabers and even Kurou, you brought them all here! We'll take care of the Sabers! You go after Kurou……!"

"……But, I don't really want to fight Kurou-chan————"

"Stop joking around. Since you bear the burden of a special mission, you're allowed to freely move around. If you cannot pay the cost of freedom————then perhaps you should return to your original place!"

"……"

Rinne's expression suddenly changed.

An expression of pain and sadness……Her usual smile dissipated like mist.

"Rinne-chan……doesn't want to hear those words."

"That's not my will, rather it is the rule of the Blazes. Only those who engage in battle can be considered as friends. There is no exception. Even though you are a Death Sword————it's the same for you."

Neena ended her speech there. With her sword in hand, she began moving forward. The other Blazes were beginning to move out as well.

Following that, Sabina and the Sabers members also had their swords in hand and prepared their stance in preparation for the attack.

The Blazes had thirty people while the vast majority of the Sabers group were men, they numbered over one hundred. However, there was zero indication of cowardice from the Blazes.

If a scuffle were to break out, then Kurou escaping with Hinako during an opening would be quite dicey. Because of that————

"A Death Sword huh……although, I never wanted to be that sort of thing."

Rinne's smile resurfaced.

Except she seemed————perplexed, as if she did not know what to do.

"Well, what should I do."

Rinne retrieved her guitar case and began to slowly open it. After that, a pole-like object was taken out.

"Uhh……"

Kurou could not help but groan.

From the looks of it, that pole-like object appeared to be the handle to a lance. More precisely speaking, it was a lance that was closer to a small spear. However, there was more to it.

Rinne continued to reach down inside the case. This time she pulled out two blades.

“What is that……?”

“Sorry Kurou-chan, please hold on a sec.”

After that, Rinne attached the two blades on the ends of the lance. That sure takes a lot of time.

“…….Jeez, this is really hard to stick in. This meticulous work is quite tricky……”

While clumsily putting it on, Rinne began whining. Finally, just as Kurou started thinking if she needed some help……

“Guh, ah……finally, it’s ready!”

Rinne raised the towering strange lance that was outfitted with two blades. She gave off a triumphant impression.

“Let me give you a quick introduction Kurou-chan. This is my personalized sword, Silver Wing.

"That sword is quite different from the norm……"

"Sorry to keep you waiting. Seems like even I have to battle even though I don't really want to."

"……How unfortunate, I don't want to fight either."

She was someone who had played games with him, grabbed a bite to eat with him, and he had seen her panties before. Battling against a girl like that was truly frightening.

However————

"Well, I can only fight now————"

Rinne's purple eyes emitted a red glow.

Any youthful Blaze was capable of changing their own eye color at will. Was it an illusion? It seemed the red hue in her eyes were to a greater degree than the other Blazes, resembling a burning sensation.

Right after that————

“Here I come Kurou-chan.”

“……”

Kurou was forced to back away. He felt a sudden pressure that was similar to an intense gale.

Rinne released her light.

It was different compared to Manaka’s light. It was similar in regards to the pressure, but Manaka’s light felt like a thick magic block pressing against you while Rinne ’s light felt like being pierced by countless needles. The pain of the piercing had already passed through Kurou’s entire body.

“You’ve got to be kidding me…….”

Kurou could not even retrieve his sword. It was as if he was entranced by Rinne's stare.

He had never felt a dangerous light like Rinne's before. Just by facing her, the sensation was like his life force was draining away.

Rinne walked forward with the pace of a leisurely stroll. The Silver Wing slashed across horizontally, sending dirt up into the air with an explosive blast of wind.

"……."

Kurou reflexively pulled out his sword to block her. An ear piercing sound resulted as sparks intensely scattered. Kurou's Olden Style was able to completely negate any attack no matter the strength of his enemy. However, when he dodged Rinne's attack, his arm felt an attack that he had never experienced before.

Immediately after, the Silver Wing's other side slashed over as well. Kurou barely parried the second strike. These attacks coming in like a wild storm once again numbed Kurou's hands.

"Guh……!"

Kurou leaped back and then repositioned his sword.

Her intense light left him feeling very uneasy. Her swordsmanship along with her rapid attacks with two blades felt quite strange. Kurou was even capable of defending attacks from Manaka of the Seven Swords. However, the power behind Rinne's sword could not be completely canceled out.

What is going on————?

Kurou did not dare to carelessly handle his sword. His eyes were locked onto Rinne's eyes.

Speaking of Rinne, she was just smiling in excitement. That smile was so crystal clear, making this battle feel as if it was not a struggle of life and death.

Kurou raised his sword and stood there————that was about all he could do.

The situation just became more of a mess. Even Hinako began to waver.

Kurou's opponent seemed to have cleared her mind about him already. After the first clash of swords, he was face to face with Rinne and stood there like a motionless statue.

Hinako gradually left Kurou's side. Of course, she did not intend on running away. Perhaps she was currently looking forward to this. Running away from a gentle person such as Kurou, Hinako would never be able to do such a thing.

Except, right now she had to maintain some distance. Forget about getting caught in a mystic artes attack, with the extreme quickness of a Swordie, they could just close in with unimaginable speeds. Hinako's current objective was to do her best to distance herself from the battle.

"Gaahhhh!"

Blood splattered everywhere as a cry rang out.

The person killed appeared to be a member of the Sabers————

The Sabers members were being slain one after another.

The weaker male members formed groups of three and had multiple groups going after one of the Blazes.

Normally speaking, Swordies were sticklers for one versus one battles. However, it was a different story when it came to warfare or a Saber-type mission. That was to be expected. Despite the miraculous victories of some of the Swordies, if they were to always adhere to a one versus one battle, the end result had a chance of being vastly different.

“Get them!”

This time it was not a cry of despair but rather a yell.

A male member yelled while waving down his sword. His strike aimed towards the front was done with terrifying power. He might even be considered as a refined swordsman. However, the strike was easily defended by the female Blaze swordsman. The female swordsman even revealed a slight smile. With just a slight touch of power imbued within her sword, she was able to push her opponent’s sword back. With a straight-line attack, she slashed apart the guy’s chest.

This sort of scene was playing out everywhere.

It was not just the male members, but even the female members were being killed left and right.

The playground became lit up exceptionally bright. In the hands of one of the Blazes, there was a whitish blue light being emitted.

Lightning based mystic artes————as the air rattled, the attack cut right through the air in a straight line. The lightning had roasted two female Sabers members following the blast.

“What a horrible situation……”

Hinako muttered upon witnessing the scene.

When it came to numbers, the Sabers had a landslide victory. However, with this type of advantage, it was a matter of how long it would last.

Which side was the stronger side? Hinako had no clue. Even so, it was clear to her that the Sabers members were dwindling.

There were swords clashing, mystic artes explosions, and blood splattering everywhere.

The playground turned into a tragic battlefield. In a short period of time, it had become the stage for the massacre of the Sabres.

“Don’t underestimate us!”

Following that sharp battle cry, the deputy’s dual blades slashed through a Blaze. The Blaze that was killed was sent flying back from the momentum of the strike and rolled along the ground. That strike possessed terrifying power.

That was one particular battle with the deputy along with the four or five female members alongside her. The other battles were just Sabers members charging in and getting killed.

“————We haven’t underestimated you guys.”

Neena spoke in a cold tone as she charged towards the deputy.

A clashing sound was made when Neena and the deputy crossed swords. The two of them seemed to have

pushed each other away as they backed off. Their landing was so forceful that the ground collapsed beneath them.

"Deputy Sabina, I heard about you from my Onee-sama. According to her, your dual-wielding skills are like an artform. That would seem to be the case. Even I can't beat you when it comes to a sword battle."

"If these are your last words, that would be quite boring you little brat."

With a tasteless smile, the deputy placed her two swords back in the scabbard. From the looks of it, she was planning on using her highly praised maneuver of pulling out her swords in mid-strike to determine a victor.

However, Neena curled her lips and smiled. Around the blade of her glowing white light enshrouded sword ————was a flame that was beginning to wrap around it.

"A flame snake? What an obvious trick, so I was underestimated after all."

"Yup, this is an obvious trick. However————there are others besides me."

"……!"

The deputy's expression changed. She had finally noticed the figures of the Blazes who were preparing to snipe her at a distance.

Four Blazes had their swords pointed at the deputy————right when Neena shouted "flames, come forth!", there were numerous mystic artes being fired.

Flame snakes, blizzard strikes, lightning shots, water blades, and even an earth hammer-like attack was aimed at the deputy from the ground beneath her. Following that, the attacks all headed towards her.

"……!"

Hinako was not able to bear watching the conclusion of the attack. When she shifted her gaze away, the barrage of explosions violently reverberated throughout the battlefield. Without any remarks from deputy Sabina, perhaps she decided to remain silent due to her dignity. Or maybe the explosions masked her words.

"....."

After Hinako timidly looked back, she noticed that the place where the deputy had last stood was devoid of anyone there. The ground was entirely a round crater. The only thing in sight was some rags and the remains of a sword scattered across the ground.

"Oh no……"

After receiving a combined artillery barrage from the Blazes that would have even frightened Kurou, the seemingly strong deputy did not have time to avoid it. Perhaps the reason why they were able to muster four additional Blazes was because of the degree of casualties that the Sabers had suffered.

Hinako knew that she lacked emotions, but even she could not hide her trembling. This was her first time witnessing a battle between two groups. Well, this could not be considered a battle, but rather some sort of horrific massacre grounds.

The other female members who were tenaciously battling were being slaughtered one after another. After the weak died off, now it was time to get to the strong ones————that was what Hinako was thinking.

"Hina!"

"……!"

Hinako swiftly turned around at a speed which would even shock herself. She noticed that Sefi and Lars were currently running over from the other side of the wall.

The two of them instantly ran to Hinako's side, standing next to her to protect her. They had already pulled out their swords.

"……Why is Sefi and Lars here?"

"That's not the problem!"

"Well, it's just a simple question."

There was a sharp contrast between Lars and Sefi's reply. Lars seemed to be quite calm. To him, there was

the corpse of someone familiar to him lying on the ground…...

"Anyways, the response from Kurou was way too late. The cellphone's power source was shut off so the GPS wasn't able to track you. That left us with two possibilities. Either Kurou and Hinako went to some love hotel and wanted to hide from Sefi, or you guys were caught up in some mess."

"Whether it's the former or latter, Rou could not possibly have dealt with either in a short period of time."

Sefi revealed a very unpleasant expression.

"Following that, the Sabers got in touch with us and said they found the Blazes' hideout. Perhaps Rou might be there——based on that inkling, we came here to check if it was true. And what do you know, we were right after all."

Lars chuckled. For Kurou to be caught in a situation where he was not even able to contact them, the only possibility that came to mind was the Blazes——. Lars and Kurou have known each other for a long time so his instinct on these matters were quite sharp.

"Alright enough of that! Rou……"

Sefi looked over to where Kurou was still facing off against Rinne. She gripped her sword and planned on rushing in.

"Hold on!"

Hinako did not know who that voice belonged to.

Sefi was probably thinking the same. Sefi turned around at the sound of that stern voice and noticed Lars grabbing her shoulders.

"Wait…...you can't go over there."

"Why not!? Even though it is the way of the Swordie to fight one versus one, it's already become an all out brawl……!"

"No one can interfere. There's no point."

Lars's current facial expression and tone was something Hinako had never witnessed before. He was clearly all smiles until just now, but his current expression was quite…...

"......Lars? What is it?"

"Hey Hinako, I'm sure you don't quite understand what is going on, but what in the world is that?"

"That? Oh, you mean Rinne?"

"She's Rinne eh. So……what's her deal?"

Lars's eyes focused right on Rinne as he stared at her.

"What do mean? That kid is a Blaze. Even I know she is very dangerous."

"No, you don't understand. Same with Sefi. She…...is different from the rest. Fortunately Kurou is able to fight on level with her……"

Hinako noticed that Lars had sweat dripping down his face. Must have been cold sweat.

"Just let Kurou handle her. If we can clear out the others, that would be the best form of support. Sefi, you protect Hinako."

"Hold on! You plan on doing that yourself!?"

"Compared to battling against that girl, this is much more enjoyable."

Now Lars finally returned to his usual self. However, there was a sense of hesitance behind it.

"Lars, the deputy was struck by a mystic artes barrage just now."

"I want to believe I didn't see that. Following the disappearance of the director, now it is the deputy who got obliterated into pieces. Must be the curse of the Sabers."

"This cursed organization looks like it's about to be completely wiped out."

"I should get to it quickly. Hinako, thanks for reminding me about the mystic artes. Well, let's give this a shot."

Just as Lars closed his eyes, he pulled out his sword and sprinted off.

It took Lars one swing of the sword to kill off a Blaze who was about to slay a male Sabers member. The Blaze swordsman was blown back and stayed motionless. His superb sword maneuver made that seem too simple.

Lars's sword was known as————the Beast Slayer. Right now there was a black smoke-like thing rising from that long and thick sword of his. It was known as his own special type of light blade.

"So strong. Lars……"

"No matter how you look at it, he is the Sword Saint's disciple."

From Sefi's tone, there was a slight sense of disdain. It was because a sword maneuver of that level was one Sefi could not achieve.

Despite Lars being a male Swordie, his strength was not at all inferior compared to a female Swordie. However, there was a superstition about the limited amount of strong male Swordies.

That would be the demonic essence that is said to inhabit the sword of all powerful male Swordies.

It was said that they would use a prohibited tactic of sneak attacking from behind in a one versus one battle. They would also kill opponents who were unarmed and occasionally use long range firearms.

Furthermore————indulging in bloodshed, having the enemy suffer, carnage, they take enjoyment in these things more than anything else.

"Ha!"

Lars summoned his strength to pull off the light blade in a flash and killed another Swordie with a horizontal slash. Blood sprayed out like a fountain. Lars avoided that and rushed towards a third person.

However, from the looks of his fights, that kind of character could not be seen. Nevertheless, with countless Sabers members being killed, Hinako thought it was quite abnormal to be able to fearlessly charge towards the enemy.

"So Lars looks like he is doing ok after all. Quite a few Blazes have been eliminated already."

When Sefi said that, Hinako finally realized something . She seemed to be a bit surprised as well. The Sabers were reduced to a number that could be counted with both hands. However, only about half the Blazes remained from their original count of thirty. Moreover, most of the survivors were wounded in some form.

“With mystic artes being a possibility, it’s best to prepare……”

“Lars is a shrewd man. Even with the number of opponents he is facing, he's able to battle with exceptional skill. Hey Hina, you still can’t use that ability right?”

“.....Even if I wanted to, I have no idea how to use it.”

With a determined expression focused on Kurou, Sefi nodded her head and said “that’s fine”.

“There’s some Sabers members here as well. If someone catches a glimpse of Hina’s ability————then the people eying you won’t be limited to just the Sun Cult and the Blazes.”

“I figured…...”

Even so, Hinako was quite happy. Sefi was truly worried for Hinako. With those intentions, one should happily accept them.

"Please be careful Sefi."

"Eh?"

"Since there are those after you as well……"

Hinako was absolutely terrified as she eyed the girl approaching them.

"Neena……"

"Hello Sefi-sama."

Neena, who had the stains of someone else's blood, stood in front of Sefi.

Even Hinako understood that those red eyes behind the glasses were indeed filled with killing intent.

After Sefi enrolled into the Sword Academy for her studies, she instantly made many friends.

When she was young, she would always be surrounded by friends. Sefi did not believe that her character suited making friends easily. Even so, when she did make friends, practically none of them were particularly close due to her princess status. If one were to become friends with someone of that status, they would refer to her as “Sefi-sama”. Or more precisely, those who did mind her status were never going to be able to get close to her.

However, Neena was an exception in a certain sense. For all of Sefi’s friends, they were the ones who approached her, but Neena was someone who Sefi greeted out of her own initiative.

Right when she enrolled, Neena did not integrate well within the classroom. Since she was a very reserved child , she would only say the bare minimum and did not really have many friends. Sefi did not approach her out of sympathy. Instead, she felt something from Neena’s eyes————like some type of radiance.

“Ah……hahaha.”

In the instant that she recalled these matters, Sefi suddenly broke out in laughter.

"……Sefi-sama! What are you laughing about?"

Neena unexpectedly revealed an expression of genuine concern.

"My bad. It was just some strange memories that resurfaced. Things are a bit different from our initial encounter……furthermore, I also remembered that your swordsmanship is quite refined as well."

"Well, thanks for the compliment."

Neena once again revealed a thankful expression.

"You hid your true strength. Regardless if it was Migune or Freya, there was no chance they could beat you if you tried your best."

"It's true, they would have no chance. Even though I surprise attacked Freya, I did fight Migune properly and won. She was tougher than I thought."

Although it was said Migune was found dead alongside a small road in the middle of the night, based

on Neena's strength, she would surely win even if she did not specifically plan a night attack.

"Of course, even I wouldn't be much of a challenge. In truth, you could probably knock away my Starbreaker rather easily. However————"

Sefi lightly waved her sword. After that, the blade of the sword————was infused with a white light.

"The light blade……Sefi-sama, looks like you can use it too."

"It's my first time doing so. I feel like I'm capable of using it now."

Sefi also felt that she was currently maturing as a swordsman. Although it was just a battle royal, Kurou's fight with her felt different. Even the light deep within her body had never felt so enriched before.

"……Very good. Except, it's a shame that Sefi-sama didn't bring the Starbreaker with her."

"Indeed. It's fine though. As long as there's a sword, a Swordie can fight."

"Hmm, I see. Then allow me to use my personalized sword. Its name is————the Flame Serpent. I still wanted to introduce the name to Sefi-sama even though it was kind of given away already."

"Not a shabby name."

Sefi chuckled. As usual, she kept her sword in a middle stance. Akin to the reflection on a mirror, Neena displayed the same pose.

"In that case, I'll tell you about my stance as well. Although, overconfidence should have a limit."

"No, it was a good teaching method. It seems like you have the talent to teach people and lead them."

"I still have a lot to learn. Neena, I hope you can-————teach me a bit as well!"

Sefi raised her sword and charged in with the speed of a missile fired from a missile launcher. However, Neena easily dodged her superb strike that was impossible for the eyes to follow.

"Tch!"

Sefi clicked her tongue.

Compared to the Starbreaker, the alternate sword felt as light as a twig. Wielding it in her normal state, the sword traveled an abnormal path.

Must adjust, must adjust————

As Sefi was telling herself that, she unleashed a second strike. Sefi's sword whooshed through the air, cutting over from the side.

"Guh!"

This time Neena used her Flame Serpent to make contact with the strike. What followed was a rigid sound as Sefi was able to suppress it with her sword by continuously putting power into her sword. The light within her body was scorching hot like an engine as it burned intensely.

"Wuaahhh!"

Sefi roared like a wild beast.

When the sword made contact with Neena's blade, she added her own body momentum to where their hilts connected in order to push Neena down.

The two of them fell down on the playground during their entanglement.

"Sefi……sama……!"

Neena, who was the one below, revealed a painful expression as she gave it her all to push Sefi's sword back . However, Sefi was going all out as well. As she pressed against Neena's sword, if she was unable to cut through Neena's Flame Serpent, she would be eliminated.

"Can't…...push……back? Your strength is on the level of a sword princess……Sefi-sama, since when did you acquire this kind of power……?"

"When it comes to technique, I'm completely outmatched by you and Rou. In that case, I can only survive through brute force!"

During that battle with Manaka————once the portal opened, her light power was raised significantly.

Nevertheless, that was still far from enough since her swordsmanship was unable to rise with it. Even when it came to the quantity of light, it was still inferior to someone like Manaka.

She wanted to become stronger, much stronger.

For that reason, Sefi could not let this become the end of her————

"Sorry, Neena……!"

"Apologizing……it's too early for that!"

Wooosh. A flame began curling up around Neena's sword. In an instant, Sefi became quite timid towards the scorching air in front of her.

"Flames, come forth!"

"……!"

Sefi unleashed her entire light force as she held her sword. She then crossed her hands in front of her face to protect herself. That heat akin to an explosion spewed upwards, blowing away Sefi like a withered leaf.

"Guh……!"

Sefi was not even able to collect herself as her back violently slammed against the ground. Unable to breath, she appeared to slowly lose consciousness.

"What, no way……"

Sefi struggled to hold on to her sword as she stood up.

The force of a mystic arte being cast at close distance is really something…...From the looks of it, when the flames crashed against Sefi's light enhanced body and blade, some sort of explosion took place.

Sefi took off the shirt to her uniform that had already been burned. Even the cuffs to her shirt were roasted black. Fortunately, her hand only seemed to have suffered minor burns. At that degree, it would only take three days for it to heal with a Swordie's recovery ability.

"Eh, that strike looks like it did nothing to you."

Neena, who was standing in front of Sefi, smiled as she stated. Although the black suit and even part of her skin was burned, her wounds seemed quite light as well.

"Jeez, what kind of nonsense are you talking about? That could have been a self-destruct explosion if you weren't careful."

"Hahaha, such a matter isn't something I'd hesitate over, even right now."

Neena brazenly smiled. Following that, she suddenly put up a stern expression.

"Sefi-sama, there was a small park in the place where I grew up. There was this slide and jungle gym, it was a very small park."

"What are you talking about?"

As Sefi repositioned her sword, a jolt of pain coursed through her hand. On the surface, it seemed her skin was fine. However, the mystic arte explosion left an internal injury in her hand.

"I really hated that park. It always felt like I had some type of duty to play around in it since the only amusement park we were given approval to play in was that one. At that park…...you couldn't yell or run around . Even if you went there, no happiness could be found."

"……Was it an amusement park?"

"It was a Blaze reservation."

Neena crooked the corner of her lips to reveal a sinister smile.

"Sefi-sama, you've looked through this neighborhood right?"

"Yeah, of course I saw it on my way here."

Considering this was a neighborhood that did not even have streetlights, Swordies were able to see in the dark with their visual acuity. It fit the description of a ghost town perfectly, a place where it would send a chill down your spine.

"It looks like a pretty dead neighborhood right?"

"Well……"

"However, don't be mistaken. This district didn't end up in this state due to being abandoned. It was dead a long time ago when the Blazes started living here."

"Neena, you……"

Could it be……it was a thought she had early on, but now Sefi was sure of it. This place————was Neena's hometown. At the very least, she must have lived here before.

"The adults had these lifeless eyes, going day after day without doing any work and just aimlessly wandering the streets. The kids grow up to become those kinds of adults. After the four generals created the reform program to defang the Blazes, the program still runs smoothly even today."

"....."

Sefi had nothing to say in response. She had the feeling that Neena was not looking for a response from her.

"The Blazes————whether it was from the start of the cleansing, or the moment of segregation, there was always people who escaped and began patrolling the reservations, secretly saving those with swordsmanship talent————and those with fighting courage. The Swordies didn't seem to care that a few Blazes went missing. Perhaps if one or two got away, it didn't really matter. They're truly some peace loving buffoons."

"Did they————have you escape as well?"

"When I was seven, the Blazes who saved me taught me the way of the sword and mystic artes. It was exciting and I was very happy. At that time I finally realized——the lack of freedom compared to being outside, not being able to wield a sword, and life within the reservation that restricted battles, it was all hell."

Neena raised her sword and began slowly walking towards Sefi.

"In order to get revenge on the Swordies who tossed me into hell, in order to help my fellow Blazes————I must battle."

"I won't play the sympathy card Neena. If you wish to battle me, the only thing I can do is reciprocate."

"That'd be wonderful Sefi-sama."

Seeing Neena's terrifying smile, Sefi understood that she was currently caught up in a dangerous situation.

This girl, who was originally her friend, had killing intent overflowing from her red eyes. It seemed like she had forgotten about the flames that had burned her body .

She should have gotten rid of her during that exchange of white blades since that was the first and last opportunity that would come up.

“Guh……”

The scenery in front of Sefi began to shake.

It was strange, she had thought there was nothing to it, but fatigue was beginning to set in from all the damage. Was it because of her close distance to the explosion? Or could it be from the being knocked back violently against the ground? Perhaps both played a role.

“Are you ready for this Sefi-sama?”

“.....Un.”

Following Sefi’s response, Neena launched forward. With a skillful twist of her body, she slashed at Sefi.

Sefi barely contained the Flame Serpent's attack. That attack, which was akin to an artillery shell blast, was imbued with all her might.

"Neena……!"

Sefi's legs weakly staggered. However she braced for the struggle as she summoned all her remaining strength. Pressing against her sword, Sefi wanted to push back Neena.

"You're quite tenacious Sefi-sama!"

Neena turned around and gracefully landed. She seemed to still have energy to spare.

Sefi felt like laughing at the situation. Death was at her doorsteps, yet she was still thinking about some otherworldly matter.

Sefi would probably be unable to handle Neena's next attack. Up to this point, she had never thought about reaching out for help and that was due to her being a Swordie swordsman. However, even if she wanted assistance, Kurou and Lars had their hands full with their own battles.

Sefi was unable to control the wavering of her vision. Which one was the real Neena?

"Sefi, here she comes!"

"……!"

Sefi's body reacted to Hinako's warning. She reflexively raised her sword. It was her most adept middle stance position where she then raised her sword up to hammer down at Neena. However, Sefi realized it when she swung her sword, Neena had stopped in her tracks after hearing Hinako's voice.

Her sword could no longer be stopped at this point. Sefi slashed downwards and————

"What…..!?"

This time it was Neena who yelled out.

Even Sefi————she saw it too.

In front of Neena, out of nowhere————a black opening resembling a crack in the air appeared.

Although it was similar to the portals, it was much smaller. Crackling noises came out of the split as it slowly expanded.

Following that, Sefi's blade came out from the rift. At the same time, the blade of Sefi's sword disappeared. It was as if the blade flew towards the enemy while the hilt and handle stayed behind. Actually, that was exactly what was playing out right now.

As Sefi stared at the blade, she recalled something.

Indeed, this same occurrence happened with her fight against Kurou in the battle royal————

"Aghhhh……!"

Neena uttered in pain. Even she could not have completely avoided the blade that suddenly appeared in front of her. Neena was slashed on the right side of her chest.

Sefi was perplexed for an instant. After confirming that her blade had returned, Sefi took aim at Neena and charged forth.

This was going to be the final strike————

"Neena……!"

Sefi's sword gave off a howling sound as the air wrapped around it.

"Guh……!"

Neena's right chest took a deep stab.

Blood was viciously spewing out. Neena weakly kneeled down as a result.

"Sefi-sama…...that was beautiful."

"......This isn't my true strength."

The strike that seemed to have crossed through time and space was not something Sefi consciously planned.

"No, Sefi-sama. It surprised me, but it was definitely your sword."

"Perhaps…..maybe that is the case."

Sefi responded while setting down her sword. She had used up all of her remaining strength.

"Was there anything you wanted to say? I'm still able to hear out what you have to say."

"Yeah……I am truly sorry for not saying anything to Lima before disappearing. Can you pass on my apology to her?"

Neena was smiling————rather she looked to be very happy. Sefi had a feeling why she would be smiling in a situation like this.

"……What about Manaka? Maybe I will meet her again."

"There's nothing to be said for her. If it's Onee-sama, she'll understand what I'm thinking at my last hour."

"Lima understands as well."

"You're right……it seems I'm in the wrong again. Although we Blazes are traitors and rebels, we are very mindful of manners."

"Indeed, I hope the savage Swordie swordsmen act the same."

Sefi also smiled and nodded her head. The atmosphere felt as if they had returned back to the days when they were friends. Perhaps Neena felt the same.

Neena's gaze inadvertently fell to Sefi's hand.

Sefi looked at the same spot and slightly trembled. She was unable to completely control her wavering.

".....Sefi-sama, was this your first time?"

"Yeah, I feel————for my first time to be you, it truly is great."

"I'm honored."

Neena joyously nodded.

"There is nothing to fret over since this is a battle after all."

"I…...understand."

Sefi tightly bit her lips.

Even though she was a past friend, it might be considered a good sign that she was trembling over slaying another person.

I am a Swordie swordsman. There will eventually be a day where I kill someone. It was an experience that one cannot help but accumulate.

Sefi forced herself to stop the trembling in her hands and focused on her dying friend.

“Everything will be fine, Sefi-sama…...thank you very much, Onee-sama.”

Neena clearly stated as she fell down facing the sky. She slowly closed her eyes————and ceased all movement.

Farewell and thank you. When I die I hope to be thinking of those thoughts as well, Sefi thought to herself .

“Waah!”

“Huh!?”

Suddenly, a coarse cry sounded. Sefi was crashed into by someone and fell to the ground.

When she realized what happened————

“Rou!?”

“.....Oh, Sefi, you’re here too.”

The person who was tangled up on the ground with Sefi was Kurou. He had cuts all over his body and there was blood visible.

Just as Sefi wanted to push Kurou away————she noticed the person who was approaching them.

She was a beautiful girl with pink hair and she was currently wearing her school uniform. It was the girl Hinako referred to as Rinne.

Within her eyes there was not a trace of killing intent ————she even displayed the playfulness of a child with her innocent smile.

"Sorry", Kurou left Sefi's side after apologizing.

Although Sefi's posture was something to behold, there was no way he could request to be carried by someone who was also injured.

"Hold on Rou, are you ok?"

"That's normally my line."

Kurou wryly smiled.

Kurou had no idea when Sefi appeared before him. However, it seemed he had fallen down during his battle against Rinne. He knew her abilities had improved, but the level of improvement was sort of unexpected. Regardless, she looked ok——Kurou breathed a sigh of relief.

Taking a quick glance at Rinne, she was currently mourning Neena's death. Neena had done things that could never be worthy of praise, but Kurou did not find any fault with her reasons. Despite going after Sefi's life, it was only her mission in the end.

"Just have a seat here Sefi. There's probably nothing more dangerous than this."

"You didn't have to tell me, I can't even stand up. If you were to do anything to me I'd be unable to escape."

"What a hard to come by opportunity."

However, Kurou did not find any satisfaction in messing around with defenseless girls. Even if he did, this was not the time for it.

"Looks like that side has been taken care of. What the, that guy looks completely revived."

Kurou stated with a hint of exasperation.

In one corner of the playground, Lars was currently in battle against a Blaze. Judging by his movements, he definitely did not resemble someone who had just come out of the hospital. Lars was his normal self. Although it was not on par with the Starbreaker, he was able to freely control the heavy and thick Beast Slayer as he fooled around with the Blaze swordsmen. With his back to the wall, he held his poise as he appeared to be wary of mystic artes coming from behind.

There were still four Blaze swordsmen left. Three Sabers members were left, but they were completely incapacitated from battling any further.

Even so, Lars would always find a way.

“I-It can’t be, there’s only five of us left?”

“Hmm? Ah, yup it appears so. We also lost quite a few people.”

Rinne was closing in on Kurou. She suddenly stopped in her tracks and surveyed her surroundings.

“I heard that the Sabers were supposed to be a group dedicated to fighting humans, but it seems they are quite something. Perhaps it’s because the group was created by Manaka-chan.”

“Indeed, we used to be very powerful.”

Kurou specifically mentioned “used to” for a reason.

The Sabers were probably done for. With the deputy already slain, what was left was the fighting core of the group. With such a drastic reduction to the fighting group, it would be hard to rebuild the organization.

"Well, whatever. Let's continue Kurou-chan."

"I don't really want to though."

Kurou was facing Rinne as he prepared his stance.

"Rou, what's the matter?"

"No matter what I do it's the same. Although we were facing each other, since I had no other choice I just slashed at her, but the attack ended up hurting me instead."

Him crashing into Sefi and falling over was due to taking a kick from Rinne. It was just a simple fake maneuver, but if he did not leap back his internal organs would have been shattered.

".....She's quite strong isn't she?"

"She's certainly more than just cute."

"You're still not at your optimal state right……?"

Eh, no signs of jealousy? Kurou felt a little down. However, Sefi was probably aware that this was not the appropriate time and place for that.

His current state————in truth, even Kurou was unsure.

"Well…..I don't know."

Kurou replied honestly and walked towards Rinne.

"Rou, you're…..not smiling are you?"

Kurou heard Sefi's worrisome voice coming from behind.

Smiling? Even he had no clue.

"That girl over there is Sefi-chan right? The princess of the four generals. You're so cute just like a fairy. Are there fairies in Swordia?"

"No idea. Swordia does have some strange creatures I heard but I haven't set foot there before."

"Neither have I. Well, let's go."

Rinne raised her Silver Wing once again. From the looks of it, there was no other impression towards Sefi other than "cute". Even though Sefi was their target, Rinne did not seem to be very interested.

Following that, Rinne began to move as if she was gliding across the ground. She swung the Silver Wing more like a sword than a lance. With a blade on each side of the lance, she seemed to be at ease even though the weight should feel abnormal. Even though the single blade was blocked, there was an incoming second blade that came down as well.

With a ferocious strike akin to Sefi's from Rinne's swing of the Silver Wing, it was as if a tornado formed during the attack. Even though she was not hit during the strike, just being in the attack radius made her body feel like it shattered into pieces.

"Guh……!"

Kurou's katana was unable to completely avoid Rinne's blade and he was repelled back. Following the sparks that resulted from the clash, his blade was being peeled apart as tiny pieces flew in all directions.

Even with the Olden Style's prediction and high precision sword style, it was unable to completely deal with Rinne's sword————

One after another the dual blades repeatedly hacked away at Kurou's sword. Unable to completely mitigate Rinne's full power, it was like a shock wave attack spreading through Kurou's entire body from the initial hand contact.

"Gah……!"

Kurou jumped back to maintain his distance from Rinne. She stopped as well and decided not to close the distance.

"Hold on Rou, you……"

"Oh my this girl is quite strong. In some ways she is even tougher to deal with than Manaka."

"I-Is she really that good……?"

Kurou nodded and stared into Rinne's eyes. There was something he wanted to ask her.

"Rinne……when did you start wielding a sword?"

"Umm……about one year ago I think?"

"One year!?"

Sefi was flabbergasted. She was supposed to have taken a lot of damage from her last battle but she appeared to be surprisingly very active.

"No way it's only been a year. To be able to match up with Rou……I was born under the sword and I have never won against him…..ah, nevermind me!"

"Are you an idiot?"

"Yup she is."

"Shut up, I said don't mind me!"

It seemed Sefi was not too fond of Kurou and Rinne's reactions.

"Well, what Rinne said is true, I had a feeling that was the case as well. Rinne must've been wielding a sword for a short period of time. In terms of strength and speed she is unexpectedly an anomaly. Despite that, she still

has too many unnecessary movements. Her swordsmanship is also a mess and she can't even control it yet."

"Jeez, you don't have to announce that to everyone."

For some reason Rinne started to blush.

"However, there are aspects that make up for the lack of experience. It's mostly your innate combat ability that makes you appear so monstrously strong. Furthermore, your messy sword style is quite annoying."

"Huh……"

Sefi understood now.

Kurou's Olden Style relied on predicting the opponent 's movements. Reading the curse that is the Swordies' killing intent and then using the sword to avoid the predetermined track.

However, Rinne's sword————even though the timing of the attack could be read, it was possible that the pathing drawn up was something different from her intent. It was like he thought, she was unable to completely control her sword style in maneuvering her

sword. Rinne used excessive strength which probably played a part in it as well.

To be able to confirm the location of which he was aimed at————against a Swordie that was of course doable. To be denied that would be a disadvantage————Kurou found it to be quite problematic.

There was a huge difference when comparing Rinne and Kurou.

Suddenly Kurou remembered something. When Sylphy spoke of the assassination, there was one corpse that was crudely hacked in pieces. That must have been Rinne's doing.

Who would have thought a Blaze would use such a sloppy swordsmanship…...

"......To have never learned the sword, does that imply that you were not raised at the reservation?"

"N-No, I was not brought up at the reservation."

Rinne clearly stated while shaking her head.

"The opportunistic insurgency of the Blazes————I was raised as one of them. However, they did not teach me the ways of the sword and I was even told not to battle. I was only to go to school like a normal person."

Rinne grabbed the front of her uniform skirt and lightly tugged down at it a few times.

"That's really strange. If you're not allowed to use a sword then you're no different from the Blazes at the reservation right?"

"Indeed, except I do retain my freedom. My identity as a Blaze was hidden and I became just your average Swordie girl until now."

"So just like Neena you wanted to infiltrate a Swordie school?"

"Although I didn't have a particular objective, I have this sickly disposition and I never went to any sword lectures. Other than that I lived my life as a normal Swordie."

"Isn't that a good thing?"

Normality, that was what Kurou desired the most.

"However, for a Blaze like me, there was no need for school at all. As a result, regardless if it came to school or my own residence————none of it was needed since wherever I go there will be nothing that lies before me."

"Rinne……"

Not having to live a life of segregation at the reservation, her life would seem to resemble that of a human.

In regards to Rinne, do Blazes find that type of situation to be unsatisfying?

"When deciding to engage in battle, I intended on participating because the Blaze's numbers were low. It came to the point where no one could say not to participate."

"Rinne, you……"

"I am a Death Sword. Among the Blazes, I appear to be a cursed existence as well."

Rinne provided a bit of a worrisome smile. It seemed to resemble self scorn.

"A cursed existence……. is that referring to you never being able to learn swordsmanship?"

"Yup, well if we converse too much I'll be yelled at. Is this what they mean when they say all witnesses need to be silenced?"

"I say, it's more like Rinne just pouring things out nonstop."

"Perhaps so. I apologize Kurou-chan, I won't hold back."

"Since I won't either, it's the same for both of us."

Rinne giggled at Kurou's words and then proceeded to leap upwards.

Just like Neena's aerial attack————Kurou was barely able to repel Rinne's Silver Wing strike with his katana.

However————

The second round of violent jabs————the sword came at him like lightning and only a brief light could be seen. Despite feeling as if he saw through the route's deviation and responding with a swing of the sword, he was unable to keep pace.

Ding, an ear piercing metallic sound echoed as sparks drifted across like a mist. Kurou's arm was feeling a bit numb as well.

Rinne did not stop and repeatedly attacked him. Even though her swordsmanship was all disorganized, it could be said that she was the strongest alien out there. It was exactly due to that which made her attacks unpredictable.

Kurou was being slowly pressured as he was constantly being pushed back.

"To be able to hold up against my sword, I would have expected nothing less from a rarity among my master's race."

Kurou blocked Rinne's sword as he smiled. Although it was a nice sword that Kurou received from the Sword Saint due to her interest in him, his own vision seemed to be quite good as well.

Kurou carried on forward despite the pain in his arm.

Following him charging at Rinne and a slash of his Olden Style————he struck Rinne's right shoulder. Blood splattered out in an instant.

"Ouch!"

Rinne's eyes flickered in surprise while falling back.

She was struck——Kurou felt that it was indeed a clean hit. Even if he was unable to completely avoid her attack, at least he was able to land a hit on her. If he could capture Rinne's attack pathing and then swing at her again——

"What the……!?"

Kurou's eyes opened widely in shock.

Right in front of him, the wound on Rinne's right shoulder began to quickly heal. The attack was one that cut deep towards the bone. No matter how amazing a Swordie's healing abilities were, to be able to heal in the midst of battle was truly something else……

"This is one of the abilities of a Death Sword. No matter how bad the wound is, as long as I am alive I can continue to battle."

"That's some unexpected foul play……"

As Kurou laughed, he felt cold sweat running down his face.

When you compound the fact his physical capabilities were already inferior along with the ability she just used, Kurou's winning chances just got slimmer.

Anyone would despair in this situation——

Furthermore, Kurou felt it was quite strange.

If there was just a slight error in that last attack, he would have been struck by Rinne's sword.

Despite laughing————he knew he had not succeeded in avoiding Rinne's sword since when their swords clashed, the momentum sent him flying back.

The place that he got knocked into was by a bench next to the wall of a building. A box and crate of indiscernible items were there as well. For some reason a lot of shoes were lined up there as Kurou tumbled into them and stayed in a kneeled down position.

No matter, his arm and sword still have not broken. Neither has his heart.

However, since there was too much clutter he could not move. If he were to take a hit here it would all be over. Just as Kurou wanted to stand up, he looked in front and noticed something——.

"Kurou! It's heading your way!"

He heard Sefi's warning, but it was unnecessary at this point.

Rinne was full of smiles as she took aim at Kurou.

With the Silver Wing in her right hand, her left hand was aimed at Kurou as well.

"Winds, charge forward!"

Something was coming from Rinne's hand. There was the false impression that her left hand was expanding.

No wait, it was not false at all!

A fist shaped block of wind came charging at him. It was much faster than Manaka and Neena's flames. Just as he was thinking about this——

Kurou vision began to slowly cloud up in a snowy whiteness.

"Rou——!"

Sefi shouted as she stood up.

Hmmm……a thought ran across his mind.

He was the boy who repelled Sword General Manaka and defeated Sword Saint Hyouka, although he did not recall that moment————

Is it possible that he would lose to this girl who is about the same age as him?

Rinne's mystic artes landed on the bench and reduced it to unrecognizable powder. The walls by it were torn apart, the stuff inside the boxes flew all over the place, and dust covered the air. It was tough to see the situation over there.

"Sefi."

Sitting in front of Sefi was Lars who seemingly popped out of nowhere. His Beast Slayer was still spewing black smoke. From the looks of it, he must have already taken care of all the Blaze swordsmen.

Even for someone as evenly matched with Kurou as Lars was, facing that many Blazes must have been daunting. He did not receive any fatal injuries, but there were quite a few wounds, his breathing was heaving, and his shoulders slumped over. Although, he was feigning dumb as usual.

"Things have turned for the worse Sefi."

"Worse? Who cares about that, Kurou needs to——"

Just what was Kurou supposed to do?

From the perspective of a calm spectator, Kurou was struck directly by the mystic arte and must have already been blasted into pieces. Rinne's mystic artes possessed such immense power. Mystic artes draw on one's quantity of light to transfer into power. For Lars to change his normal facial expression, you can imagine the kind of power she had.

Tears flowed down. It was too late, Kurou was already ————.

"No way, it isn't like that. I just took a glance and Kurou seemed to be——laughing it off?"

"Eh? I guess, but just now——"

"Sefi, listen to me. Has there been anything weird going on with Kurou?"

"Weird huh……he isn't in peak condition. Isn't that just the light body's aftereffect?"

"If his condition worsened then Kurou can't fight against Swordies. But don't forget, that guy has been walking on a tightrope his entire life."

Of course Sefi understood that clearly.

When it came to strength and speed, he was no match for a Swordie. He does have his own technique to overcome this overwhelming capability gap. If he were to make one mistake he would instantly be walking with the dead.

Anyone could see that there was danger associated with a battle between swordsmen. However, Kurou's battle was especially perilous and could be considered suicide.

"Kurou-chan"

Suddenly, Rinne began to speak. She seemed to be in high spirits.

"I know you're still alive. It's about time you come out."

"Huh————"

The only person in complete surprise was Sefi. Even Hinako, who was standing like a statue, did not utter a sound.

Sure enough, the scattered wreckage emitted a shuffling sound and began to collapse. Following that, the dust slowly dispersed and a white light could be seen through an opening within the wreckage.

"Rou——!"

Sefi could not control the elation she felt in her tone.

After pushing aside the debris, Kurou appeared with his body shrouded in a white light.

Although Sefi had witnessed the battle between Kurou and Manaka, she could not recall what happened after the portal opened.

The light body——for humans, they are able to barely mobilize one's own light capabilities. It would never be on par with a Swordie's, but the light body could allow humans to surpass their normal capabilities.

Kurou was standing and held the katana in his right hand which was drooped down. His head was lowered so his face could not be clearly seen. His uniform became tattered and full of blood trails, but at least he was alive. Sefi wished she could instantly run to him, but her legs still could not move.

And that was not all.

“Rou……?”

Kurou was a familiar figure to her who was also very towering——and at that point, she could faintly see him.

Sefi’s heart began to race.

However, when looking at Kurou’s sword, that burning passion just was not there.

She could hear her own heartbeat. Slowly but surely though, her heart began to change to worry.

That is not the Kurou I know.

It was not the same thought process from when she wanted to kill Rou.

However, for some reason————her chest hurt. It felt like something was strangling her.

What’s happening to me……

“……Heh.”

She was able to make out Kurou's lips curling upwards.

"Haha……hahahahaha."

Kurou began to loudly laugh and brushed the fringe of his hair. The traces of a sword wound still remained there. That must be the wound Kurou received from the Sword Saint.

"This wound is so painful, ahhhhhh!"

"Kurou seems to be a bit off……"

Hinako walked over. She revealed a seldom look of worry.

"W-What's going on Lars?"

As she was suppressing her heart from pounding, Sefi asked.

"The situation just got a bit more complex. Perhaps it's due to crossing swords with Manaka. The battle against the student council president didn't help either. Kurou has returned."

"Returned……"

"Yup, Kurou's condition never really deteriorated. In fact this is his ideal state and it has nothing to do with the aftereffects of using the light body. When he begins to battle, he'll be able to move around like usual since he was conditioned to do so. Even if he appears to be exhausted, he's still in excellent condition except he's just a bit perplexed is all."

"What do you mean……"

Sefi tilted her head and asked.

Kurou flew out from the wreckage like a bullet. With superhuman speed, he began to rush towards Rinne.

"Wahhhh!"

Kurou yelled as he crudely swung his katana. It was completely different from his refined Olden Style.

"What!?"

Rinne emitted a cute cry of despair as she blocked his sword. For a Swordie and especially a Blaze like Rinne

who possessed extraordinary physical strength, that light body enabled attack probably seemed like nothing to her.

"K-Kurou-chan……?"

Rinne's eyes opened widely in shock. She was not comfortable addressing him as Kurou-chan. It was not just because of their current state that she was left feeling helpless, there was something else to it.

Kurou kept on going as he continued to wield his sword. The battle momentum flipped between Kurou and Rinne with his brutal and savage sword style.

Was this the real Kurou————?

"I've seen Kurou like this before."

Lars muttered out loud.

"A couple days before our master disappeared————in other words, it was right before their battle. At that time, I felt Kurou started to act strange. Compared to his constantly smiling self——even during practice he felt like a completely different person. It wasn't a Swordie's swordsmanship and it wasn't the Olden Style, it was as if he was provoked by something."

"Hmm, it probably was that——from the time when he pulled out his sword. Right now, there is no one here who can stop that man. Even I…...can't do it."

As Lars was speaking, sweat began dripping down his cheeks.

In front of him was Kurou, who was like a wild beast rampaging around.

What am I doing?

Kurou asked himself that question. However, he was unable to stop his hand from swinging the sword.

The light body activated when he saw the blast of wind leave her hands. It was because he was pushed to the brink in what was a hopeless situation that this ability activated. If the light body did not activate, he likely would have died from a direct hit by the mystic arte. With the light body protecting him, he was able to quickly evade by going behind the bench.

Despite that, his wounds were not light. Taking on that high speed block of wind must have been very scary. In fact, it was tough for him to even stand up.

"Riiiiiiinnnnneeee!"

What am I yelling for?

He felt as if he was a spectator to himself. That other him was watching Rinne being pushed into a corner.

The usual smile that was on Rinne's face until now——that completely disappeared. With an uncomfortable expression, she devoted herself to dealing with Kurou's sword.

The white blade was glowing with light and light sliced through her wind.

Why am I throwing everything into my sword strikes? That is not what the Olden Style is about. It is also different from what I learned from the Sword Saint.

Saintly Slash of the Nine Heavens——the nine paths unleashed from this killer strike were not visible to the

user even with the light body activated. He was just wildly swinging his sword, aiming at weak points, and charging forth with everything he had.

“Kurou-chan, you……!”

A sign of fear surfaced on Rinne’s face.

Of course anyone would be afraid. Kurou thought to himself what it would be like to be attacked by this beast-like being.

Despite knowing Rinne was in fear, Kurou had no way of stopping himself.

As he recklessly slashed around, Rinne was eventually cornered.

“What!?”

Rinne let out a small cry of despair. Because of Kurou’s sword, she was struck in the crevice between her breasts. It was soft, but he indeed felt that he landed a clean blow . That cream colored sweater of hers was stained with blood which was oozing out.

However, he knew that she would be healed in an instant. The bleeding quickly stopped. That cry of pain from before was also gone.

“Rinne……”

Kurou deviously called her name.

While continuing to wield his sword, he repeatedly hacked away at Rinne’s chest, abdomen, hands and legs.

Rinne’s uniform and snowy white skin were covered in cut marks and blood sprayed everywhere. However, all those wounds immediately healed.

Despite witnessing this completely unfair ability, Kurou kept his smile.

That twisted smile was probably because Rinne, who was all covered in blood, was——

She was in a sorry state, but to Kurou, the Rinne in front of him possessed much more charm. He felt Rinne was a bit emotionally unstable despite not knowing what she was thinking. Perhaps she was currently revealing her fear of trying to staying alive.

I want to kill Rinne.

More fighting, I want to rip her heart out————

“Kurou-chan…...!

Rinne parried Kurou’s sword and distanced herself from him. She took a deep breath.

Well, what do you plan on doing?

Kurou did not really do anything. He just waited for Rinne to make a move.

“I…...I have to battle in order to protect this place. I’m very sorry.”

“You’re doing what you have to do, there’s no need to apologize.”

To Rinne’s exasperated tone, Kurou gave a whimsical reply. Even if he was killed, Kurou would hold no grudge against Rinne.

“Kurou-chan…...is very strong.”

Rinne mentioned in a slightly depressed manner. With her hands tightly grasping the hilt of the Silver Wing, she raised it to her chest level.

After that, she began to slowly spin her Silver Wing. Rinne skillfully twirled the Silver Wing while raising her hands in the air.

Next to Rinne's head, the Silver Wing was rotating like a helicopter as it maintained its spin. The wind roared as a result and made him want to cover his ears.

".....What are you doing Rinne?"

"My sword skills are very cruddy. However, I was taught to use this when facing a powerful opponent."

"By who?"

"I believe this is called a death strike."

Rinne did not answer Kurou's question.

A death strike, Kurou thought it was a bit strange. The double-bladed lance was just making a buzzing sound in the air while rotating. If she did not accumulate proper

levels of training, then even this kind of rotation would be difficult to keep up. Yet, this was not considered anything special either.

However——

"Are you kidding me?"

Kurou clenched his teeth while maintaining his smiling composure.

Rinne was twirling her Silver Wing while charging at him. When she closed the distance, she ferociously swung down the spinning Silver Wing.

"Wuuhh……!"

Kurou struggled to avoid the Silver Wing. However, it was not as simple as a quick dodge. The rotating Silver Wing emitted a wind pressure that caused the ground to crumble and the remnants even flew towards where the other Sabers and Blazes were. This was truly an unbelievable display of power.

A direct hit would probably result in his body literally turning into dust.

Just when his stance was disrupted, another strike came at him. Kurou jumped back a great distance to avoid it.

He then jumped to the side to avoid the ensuing shockwave.

“The Silver Wing’s Divine Wind——can Kurou-chan defend against it with the Olden Style?”

“Who knows.”

As he replied, Kurou was thinking to himself “are you serious?”

Rinne’s manipulation of the Silver Wing was like a high speed propeller. Just a graze would result in his entire body being sucked in and shredded apart.

“These are some really ridiculous moves Rinne!”

“You’re the one who forced me to use this!”

That was indeed the case.

If he was a bit weaker, then perhaps he would not have to experience this fearsome killer strike.

No no, for someone who possesses the successor mark of the Sword Saint, there was no such thing as wanting to be weaker.

Kurou, thou must slay thee――

"……!"

His master's voice resonated in his head.

Kurou remembered her wielding the Eternal Horizon and exuding an enormous killing intent in front of him.

That's right, I did battle against the Sword Saint.

Facing against the terrifying Sword Saint, he managed to come out alive.

Being able to confront Rinne's overwhelming light that pierced his body, that must have been the result of overcoming the Sword Saint's terror.

"Master…...no matter who I battle, I will always remember you."

Kurou muttered to himself.

Now was not the time to delve into past memories.

The thing he needed to think about was his own sword . If he were to rampage like a beast, there was no way he could break through Rinne's tactics.

The Olden Style and everything he learned from the Sword Saint, he must remember all of it——

As Rinne waved the Silver Wing across, she came at him again.

"Tch!"

Kurou immediately used the Olden Style to defend and then pulled back his sword. With his increased leg strength from the light body, he once again maintained his distance.

Having his sword make contact with that violently rotating lance was too dangerous.

Moreover, her swordsmanship was similar to when she held the sword normally, which meant even Rinne still had no idea where the trajectory was headed.

Just like before, only relying on the Olden Style was not enough to overcome Rinne's lance.

".....That's not the same. Neither is that, my master."

Kurou started to smile once again.

Rinne never let up and repeatedly attacked him.

He never felt scared or had a moment of cowardice.

His moves were not limited to just the Saintly Slash of the Nine Heavens when combining the Olden Style and the light body.

"Rinne, I have to kill you——!"

Without a doubt, Rinne did not show any signs of stopping towards his words.

Perhaps she was also trying her best too…...When she was faced with Kurou's terror, maybe she was determined to kill Kurou in order to escape that fear and power.

"Kurou-chan!"

The Silver Wing emitted a ghastly buzzing sound as it came at Kurou.

However, Kurou had already spotted the weakness in the Silver Wing's Divine Wind. The flaw in this monstrous death strike was——it was too slow. Of course it was faster than normal Swordies, but it could not compare to Manaka's sword.

As a result, if he was not crushed under the power, he could deal with it.

"A cursed being, isn't that what you said before Rinne ?"

With the Silver Wing's blades approaching him, Kurou mumbled to himself.

"I wasn't like this among the humans either……!"

Kurou's entire body was radiating with white light as he swung his sword——against the Silver Wing that was trying to tear him apart, he began a stream of attacks.

"Ahh……!"

Rinne let out a cry of despair.

Due to Kurou landing a hit, the high-speed spinning Silver Wing shifted greatly from its intended path.

Petal Flurry——originally this move was supposed to be used when dealing with numerous opponents at once. Practically at about the same time, countless repelling maneuvers would be used to block the opponents' swords——this was an art of the Olden Style.

By the time Kurou finished up his move, he swung his sword downwards and knocked away Rinne's Silver Wing.

The Silver Wing was knocked into the air and then fell on the ground where it tumbled around a bit.

"Aaaahh……"

Rinne revealed an expression akin to a lost soul as she plopped to the ground. Kurou kept up his intimidation while approaching her.

"……How strange, it shouldn't have ended up like this."

Rinne uttered with a weary voice.

Originally, Kurou's chances of defeating Rinne were about one in a million. That was because in a certain sense she was even tougher than Manaka.

What am I doing? Why am I in this situation?

Right, this was the same case with Manaka. It never should have turned out the way it did——

"Rinne……"

Kurou slowly raised his sword. Due to him swinging the sword with all his strength, there were notches everywhere on the blade while he was continuously using the Petal Flurry move. The sword became tattered looking.

On the other hand, having it tattered like that may even become a boost for him.

However, as long as the blade was still intact, that was more than enough for him to work with.

If he were to just kill this immobilized opponent…...

“Kurou-chan!”

While sitting down, Rinne collected herself and aimed her left hand towards Kurou.

“Even my own death counts as a weapon. That is what it means to be a Death Sword!”

“Is that so!?”

Kurou yelled out without fear.

Rinne’s wind based mystic artes————if he were to take a blast from this distance, not even a corpse would be leftover perhaps.

——Oh well.

To swing his sword and take out the enemy, that was all Kurou had as his objectives. Using one's death as a means of attack? Of course it was something to be expected from any fighter.

"Winds, charge forward!"

"……!"

Kurou swung his sword down without a care————— however, he could not do it.

"……Eh?"

With her left hand raised up, Rinne revealed a perplexed expression. The block of wind that was supposed to rip Kurou into pieces did not even materialize in her hands.

"What happened……?"

"……"

Kurou suddenly shifted his gaze.

Over there was——

"Kuro——"

It was Hinako who was trembling as she came over.

Her facial expression was akin to a dream-like state——and a golden light radiated from her body which was different from the usual white light.

Kurou had seen Hinako being enveloped by that kind of light twice before——once when he first met her that one night and the other time was during the battle against Manaka.

"There's something I can do after all. Or perhaps, this is something only I can do."

It was just as she said, Kurou thought to himself. Sefi was already at her limits and although Lars maintained that nonchalant expression, he must be running out of strength by now after battling against numerous skilled Blazes.

Sealing mystic artes——Hinako had used this move back when he was battling against Manaka and now it appeared again.

Compared to before, it was still the same in that there was no idea under what circumstances and steps could cause it to activate.

“In that case, let me protect you this time. Kuro, I won’t let you die. Furthermore…...I can’t really let you kill this girl in such a manner.”

Hinako swiftly jogged over to right in front of Kurou and acted as a barrier between Kurou and Rinne’s battle.

“Kuro.”

Hinako uttered that one word and suddenly kissed Kurou.

“Hina!?”

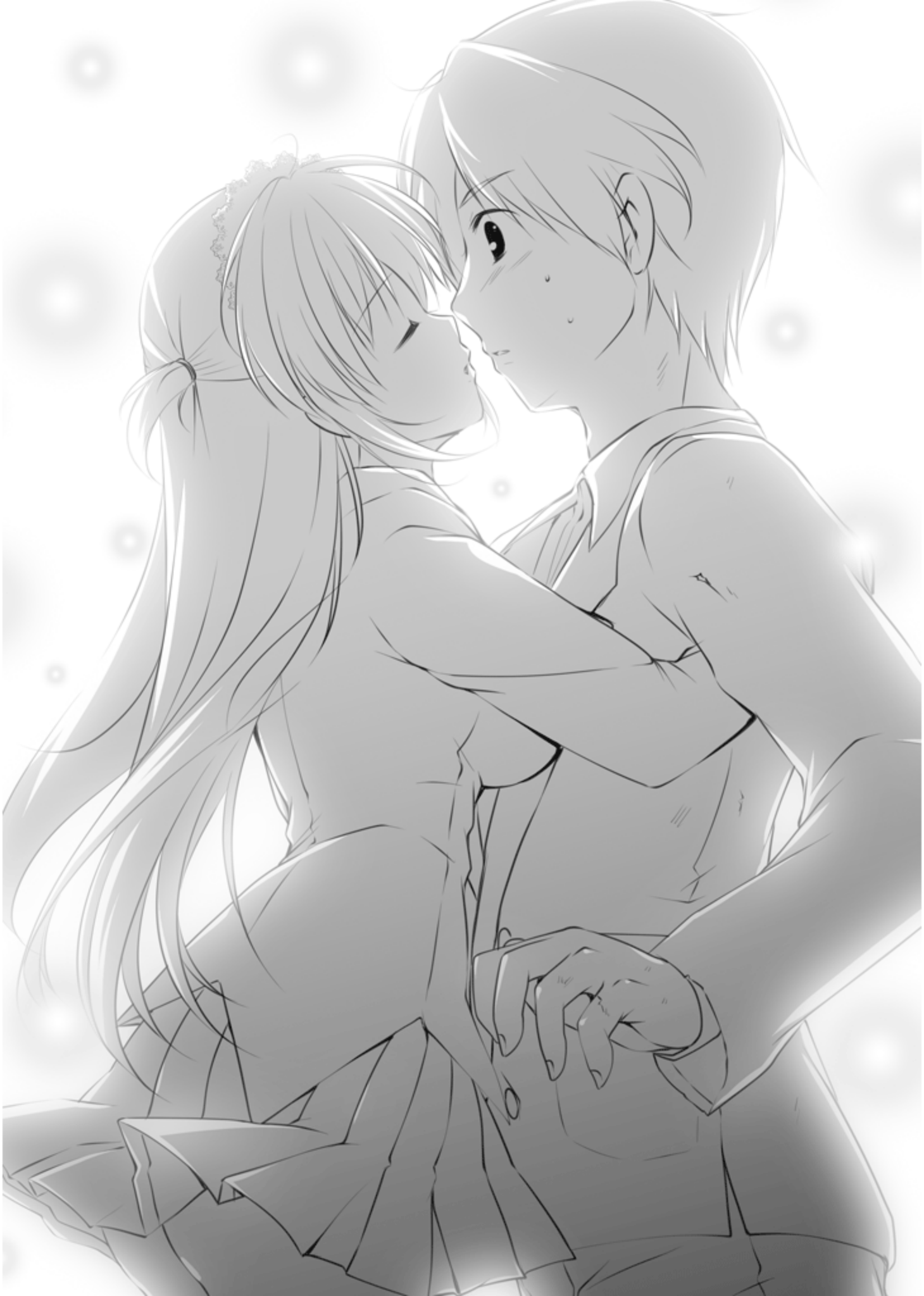
Suddenly Sefi’s voice could be heard, but Hinako paid no mind while having her lips overlap with Kurou’s.

As their lips converged, fifteen seconds passed———
—why was Kurou keeping track of the time.

“.....Huu.”

Hinako slowly separated from his lips and stared directly into his eyes. Was it due to her feelings? Her face became a bit red.

From this view, Hinako looked rather cute.



As Kurou thought to himself——he felt his head starting to calm down.

".....Why did you do that so suddenly?"

Kurou gazed at Hinako as he candidly asked.

"Back then when Sefi went ballistic——Kurou used this method to stop her. So I was just trying the same thing."

"Don't mention that!"

Sefi pouted in anger. Even if she could not stand up, she pretty much recovered most of her strength.

".....No, well I see. What was I doing?"

Kurou muttered to himself.

With his mind back in order, he reverted back from that split personality to just his usual self.

"If this kind of thing reverts me back to normal, I wouldn't mind going crazy once again."

"......Rou, I'll have you remember this."

Sefi was restless from not too long ago. It seemed she was not able to take a joke.

"Great. Seeing Kurou go insane like that wasn't very fun."

"Was your amusement really the problem?"

"You're right, the problem is…..over there."

Hinako slightly lowered her line of sight. Rinne was still just sitting down.

"......Hehehe. Ahahaha."

Rinne was laughing like Kurou had been before. She sincerely thought all of this was so strange.

"Ah, this is so interesting. Very interesting. Ever since hanging out with Kurou-chan, I have been able to experience one fascinating thing after another."

"Well, what you perceive as interesting must also be very good as well."

Kurou joked around. He had no interest in battling against Rinne anymore. However, he had no idea if the opposition felt the same way.

"Yet, I……always believed that things would turn out like this."

"You believed?"

"Yeah, I was pretty sure that Kurou-chan and I wouldn't die. Actually, I knew that would be the case. This is another ability of the Death Sword…..I'm knowledgeable."

"Knowledgeable……"

Rinne did not answer and stood up. She proceeded to pick up the Silver Wing and guitar case off the ground.

"I also knew that Neena-chan wanted Kurou-chan dead. If I didn't do anything, Kurou-chan's head would be chopped off."

"……Wasn't that something you overheard from your friends?"

"I had been excluded from the others. Neena hid the fact that she wanted to kill you. However, Neena-chan chopping off Kurou-chan's head——that moment was something I could clearly see."

"……You mentioned 'see'……are you referring to the power of clairvoyance?"

Kurou was totally stunned.

It seemed like a joke but that was the only thing that ran through his mind after hearing such a statement.

"You are correct. Although it isn't much of a combative ability. Since I can only see a one second duration of what happens, it doesn't serve much of a purpose in battle. I can see the future from a couple of hours to as far as a few weeks out."

"It's something that doesn't really get used."

If it was not something very dire, then perhaps it would be forgotten after a few weeks anyways.

"In fact, today's vision wasn't just limited to that. Even when we were eating the sandwiches.....the scene that I saw……"

As she was saying that, for some reason Rinne's face turned red and she lowered her head.

Kurou was dumbfounded.

"I don't know when it's going to happen though. Even so, that means……"

"What are you talking about?"

"K-Kurou-chan and I are in a certain room."

"Where?"

"Kurou-chan……"

Rinne's gaze slightly shifted around as she looked at Kurou. It was a very cute expression.

"Kurou-chan pushed me on the bed and began to….. kiss me…...as well as fondle my breasts. Many shameful things were done to me. I was also making some strange noises……"

"Hold on a minute!"

What was she talking about!?

"I haven't even done those sorts of things to Sefi before !"

"Don't make an example based on me in every situation! That said, what in the world are you talking about!?"

"I don't know when it will happen, but it shouldn't be too long from now."

"Wha……!"

Sefi was rendered speechless.

Kurou was also doubting what he just heard. Rinne was a Blaze and the enemy's strongest fighting force.

For a girl like her to be on the bed, that was hard to believe.

"The clearer I'm able to see it, the easier it will be for it to occur…...not only did this apply to Kurou-chan's death…...t-the things that happen on the bed…...I was able to clearly see that future as well."

"....."

Kurou already had nothing to say.

When she saved them from Neena's sentence, that seemed to justify her words a bit more.

"No matter what, I can't just let Kurou-chan and I ignore such things. Perhaps, t-this…...might be my first time. That kind of thing is really important."

"R-Rou you can't do this. You're nothing but a pervert who also loves to sexually harass people!"

"It isn't harassment. It seemed like I was also enjoying it……"

"I don't want to hear that either!"

Neither did Kurou. He did not want any prior knowledge on the future.

"The atmosphere here seems to have changed……"

"With Kurou around, it's hard to be serious."

Hinako and Lars pitched in as well.

That was true, it no longer felt like the stage for battle. Kurou suddenly sighed out loud.

"Rinne, let's go. Do I really have to get rid of you…...I don't even remember. I was saved by you once and therefore I want to help you out once as well."

"Ah, returning the favor I see."

Rinne chuckled and gently tapped the Silver Wing against her head.

"I also thought of something. Swordies are a sword loving race…...and for Kurou-chan's sword, although it is very frightening…...I think I have already been captivated by it."

"What…..!?"

That was not Kurou, but rather Sefi who was at a loss for words once again.

Of course Kurou was shocked as well, but he chose not to say anything because it was hard to tell whether or not Rinne was being serious.

“Fufufu, well goodbye then Kurou-chan.”

“.....It might not be bad to meet up again someday.”

Rinne smiled in response to Kurou.

Carrying the guitar case and Silver Wing, she gently jumped up and after a few hops she disappeared from the confines of the playground.

No one decided to give chase.

In truth, Kurou was already in no state to battle. Sefi and Lars were probably in the same boat. Although Hinako was still an able body, she was of course not capable of battling.

“Well…..let’s head back now.”

As Kurou stated as such, he surveyed Sefi and the others. Everyone was all beaten up, but the four of them did survive in the end.

What did not survive was————the Sabers.

What would happen from here on out?

Kurou stared at the playground full of fallen swordsmen——and contemplated over his survival and what the future would bring.

Epilogue

It was one week after the battle between the Sabers and the Blazes——

Although it was not officially announced, the government had already decided to disband the Sabers.

On the surface they seemed to be trying to reestablish a new counterinsurgency fighting force——but in reality, the core of the fighting force was practically eliminated.

It was actually quite amazing to see the disintegration of the group due to a couple hundred strong fighting force being eliminated. Having said that, during that previous battle, the lives of many elite Sabers troops were lost on that day. Including the deputy, a total of three Sword Princesses died. To Swordies, they were precious fighting assets.

Director Manaka betrayed them and the Deputy who succeeded her was now dead. In terms of an armed organization, the Sabers were a small group from the start. Having lost two levels of leadership, the Swordie government basically had no reason to continue the existence of the group.

That was what Kurou was informed of and his understanding of the situation.

"So in the end, we're out of the job starting today?"

Kurou went over the files sent to him in the morning as he walked along the hallways of the Sword Academy. Today was Saturday so there was not a student in sight.

The aftereffects of using the light body a week ago during the battle still lingered around so Kurou's body was sort of sluggish. With that said, slowly walking about was something he was still capable of doing.

"That's some classified documentation. You shouldn't be bringing that to school right?"

Lars, who was walking next to him, had an exasperated expression. He received the same info as well. He lost his job too, but it did not really seem to bother him.

Still, when you look at his situation, even if he is unemployed right now he still had the successor of the four generals spot awaiting him in the future. Although, whether or not he wants to inherit the family business was yet to be determined.

"Does it really matter? This notice is from a group that's about to vanish."

"You seem to be quite carefree about it. Well, it was a good run. Where do you want to play next?"

"You're the one who is carefree…...the Sabers was only a fun way to pass the time for you right?"

Lars was a boy who became the Sword Saint's disciple. Up till now it has been fine, but can the prince of the four generals really idle around so much?

"What you meant to say was, can we continue to have fun down the road? I have a bad premonition about the future."

After his complaint, Kurou folded up the letter in half and proceeded to put it in his bag.

When receiving the notice, Kurou and Lars were also summoned by Sylphy.

Kurou thought Sylphy had already concluded the investigation, but she was still within the school. Having said that, she seemed to be moving out of the temporary office she had in the conference room.

Kurou arrived at the front of the conference room. He knocked on the door that was guarded by the twin Sword Princesses and then entered the room.

"Ah, glad you two could make it."

Sylphy happily nodded as she was clearing up the table.

After having Kurou and Lars take a seat, she then sat down.

"I don't have much time so I'll just cut to the chase. Have you guys heard about the Sabers being dissolved?"

"Yeah."

Both of them nodded at the same time.

"What this means is you two can focus on your studies starting today. Of course, as long as Kurou graduates

from here, you can earn your Dagger so there's still some merit to it."

"That would be awesome."

Kurou deliberately revealed a serious expression as he nodded again. Kurou knew he was unemployed, but from another angle, he was able to focus on school——it was not till just now that he realized that possibility. Except, he did not have any financing for his tuition anymore. He would be able to barely get by with his savings, but that would not cover his living expenses. Compared to his grandeur battles, this was such an obscure inconvenience.

"Lars you should do well in school too, your parents would be very happy."

"Who knows, my family is pretty hands off in regards to education."

Is that so——Kurou secretly doubted. Kurou had met his father who was a current four general and he seemed to be very headstrong about his son.

"However, you two are coveted fighters. This time you guys broke through thirty or so Blaze members and

repelled a Death Sword or whatever it was called. She seemed to be the main enemy swordsman right?"

Sylphy stated as such and revealed a smile.

At this time, there was someone knocking on the conference room door.

"Great timing, please come in."

The door slowly opened, the person who came in and said "pardon the interruption" was——

"Sylphy-sama, sorry I'm late."

It was the student council president——Isyuto.

Why was the student council president here? Sylphy chuckled in front of the puzzled Kurou.

"Now that we have everyone here. Based on our investigations of that previous incident and the recent one, I obtained a lot of information. There are some matters that I just can't ignore. In order to further investigate the truth, I require a small contingent to move out on my behalf."

"A small contingent?"

Sylphy nodded in response to Kurou's inquiry.

"Isyuto, Kurou, and Lars, I hope you three will form a group to help me with my investigation. Of course, I will offer you all a salary. I think an amount similar to the Sabers pay would be appropriate."

"I'm in."

"Wow an immediate answer!?"

Kurou answered extremely quickly and that was followed by an immediate response by Lars. Perhaps this was the tacit understanding between two disciples that have grown up together since their childhood. Kurou had no reason to decline anyways. Although he was mindful of the fact that the student council president might get in the way, having someone who possessed a small chest by him for once might not be too bad. More importantly, being able to find another place to work right away was truly a blessing.

"Except, you have no authority to decline it either. That's because you have caused a ton of trouble yourself. Especially when it came to the Manaka incident where

you didn't report on the matter. That worsened the situation by a great deal."

"....."

So I was goofing off? Kurou quietly made a tsk sound.

There were only three survivors from that battle between the Sabers and Blazes.

Did they end up seeing what Hinako did?

"So you pretty much agreed to it. What about you two ?"

"I have already heard about Sylphy-sama's proposal. Kurou, Lars, I look forward to working together with you guys. I shall be the captain of the group, no objections taken."

Isyuto immediately exerted her leadership abilities. She was frequently in a position above other people so this type of thing was right up her alley.

Lars had no objections to being Sylphy's subordinate or letting Isyuto be the captain either. Considering his circumstances, he was very likely using this as an opportunity to pass the time.

"Well then, let's get to work right away. Your first task will be――"

"Welcome back Rou."

"Welcome back Kuro."

After returning to his two story residence within the academy's courtyard, Kurou was greeted by these two girls.

Sefi and Hinako were both resting in the living room. The two of them were facing each other playing some card game. The harmony between them was really great.

"I didn't think you'd be back this early."

"That's because Sylphy-sama was pretty busy."

Kurou replied back to Sefi.

Today Sefi was wearing a long sleeve t-shirt along with shorts. No matter how many times he glanced at her casual look, it was quite refreshing and certainly very enjoyable.

Sefi's wounds were basically all healed. Even if it was just for a moment, Sefi did slay a past friend of hers but she did not seem to be feeling guilty. At this juncture, a Swordie's unique set of values came in handy.

"Ah, I win again. Sefi is so weak."

After she said that, Hinako revealed her cards. She had a full house.

Hinako's attire was a comfortable short sleeve blouse with a miniskirt that hugged her body tightly. Of course, these were the spoils from her previous shopping spree. Sefi had stored everything by the station's storage locker.

"Hinako's poker face is absolutely insane……"

Sefi was unwilling to give up her poker chips. After that, it appeared she had just recalled something.

“So in that case Lars isn’t coming over?”

“He decided to go back. He must be pretty exhausted still.”

Despite the fighting power of the Sabers declining by a great deal, Lars was still able to kill a dozen or so well-trained Blaze members. He had just exited the hospital so he should probably rest up.

“What did Sefi’s sister want from you Kuro?”

“Umm, how should I say this…...I work under the command of Sylphy-sama.”

“Eh, Onee-sama?”

Sefi was surprised since she had no idea what was going on.

This meant that the contents of the first mission were ——

"Is that so. Isn't that a great thing? You were able to immediately find work."

"Yup, and I can continue being Hinako's bodyguard."

"Really? That's great. If I were to be tossed aside, then I'd become an unemployed homeless person."

"Though I have no right to criticize others, you're too easygoing Hinako."

Kurou said some silly things while shifting his gaze from Hinako.

For some reason he found it very hard to look directly at Hinako.

"I'm going to get a change of clothes. No peeking Sefi."

"Who would want to, idiot!"

Kurou heard Sefi's scolding from behind while walking to his room on the first floor.

After changing from his school uniform to casual clothing, Kurou tumbled into his bed.

He let out a small sigh and was feeling very depressed.

Sylphy's first mission was——capture the Sun Cult leader.

Furthermore, the surviving Sabers were struck by Hinako's mystic artes seal. Since this situation was brought to light, he had to figure out the mystery behind it.

In regards to Hinako's abilities, the cult leader may know a thing or two. It would be very convenient if he could just ask for the answers from the cult leader.

Sylphy-sama said it was a necessary step in eliminating the Blazes.

Kurou understood, he too knew about the situation.

Moreover, this mission contained many things of concern to him.

If a battle against the Sun Cult were to happen, it was very likely that he would have to battle against the duo with the dangerous aura.

If possible, Kurou wished he could avoid having to battle against Kido Akari.

He was also mindful of the Blaze group's actions, who are allied with the Sun Cult.

Manaka, who vanished once again, and Rinne, who left a peculiar oracle, what were they planning?

Plus, the most important thing was——

This mission was going to bring Hinako in the midst of danger and perhaps hurt her feelings.

It was not just anyone that he had to capture, it was her parents.

What had to be unraveled was the mystery behind Hinako.

"Hinako…...has the ability to impede me."

Kurou personally placed the person he did not want to hurt the most in a path of despair. The future——did not seem willing to go in the right direction.

Afterword

Hi everyone, Kagami Yuu here.

So this was the second volume. To have nothing go wrong between these quick release times sure allows me to breath a sigh of relief.

Even so, there is no time to relax. If only I could continue to go at this pace……I wish that could be the case, but it'd be very difficult. No, I have to believe in myself.

Hmm, let me discuss a bit about the contents of the second volume.

There were already many characters within the first volume, however this volume added quite a bit more to that. Despite most of them being females, it was an expected development.

With the character count going up, it was rough trying to figure out the order of appearances. Nevertheless, the main characters acted according to their own intuition.

The one who has been the most impulsive has been the male lead, Kurou. I hope that he will continue to do his best in his sexual harassment. Wait, that's not something I should be encouraging right?

Umm, then instead there will be some unknown forces encouraging him to do what he is doing.

This is basically an action novel……however, within that there is romantic comedy interspersed with some creative plot. I've been thinking that was the case for a while.

Although I had written some very serious works in the past, it somehow turned into this. Humans never fall under predispositions it seems.

For now I'll consider these changes as improvements. After all, it's quite a happy way to think about things.

Lastly I would like to thank a few people.

Mikeou sensei, the art this time was quite superb. I apologize for all the characters. Even so, I'm afraid there will be more.

Editors, thank you for your usual care. I always seem to burden you guys and I am terribly sorry for that.

Disregard that I suppose…...instead of acknowledgments, it turned into an apology statement.

Let's change the mood a bit. Everyone who contributed to the volume, I thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

Most importantly, every single reader deserves the biggest token of appreciation.

Well then, I hope we can meet again everyone.

2012 July Kagami Yuu

Translator's Notes and References